

ITINERANTS
OF THE
TIMBER
LANDS

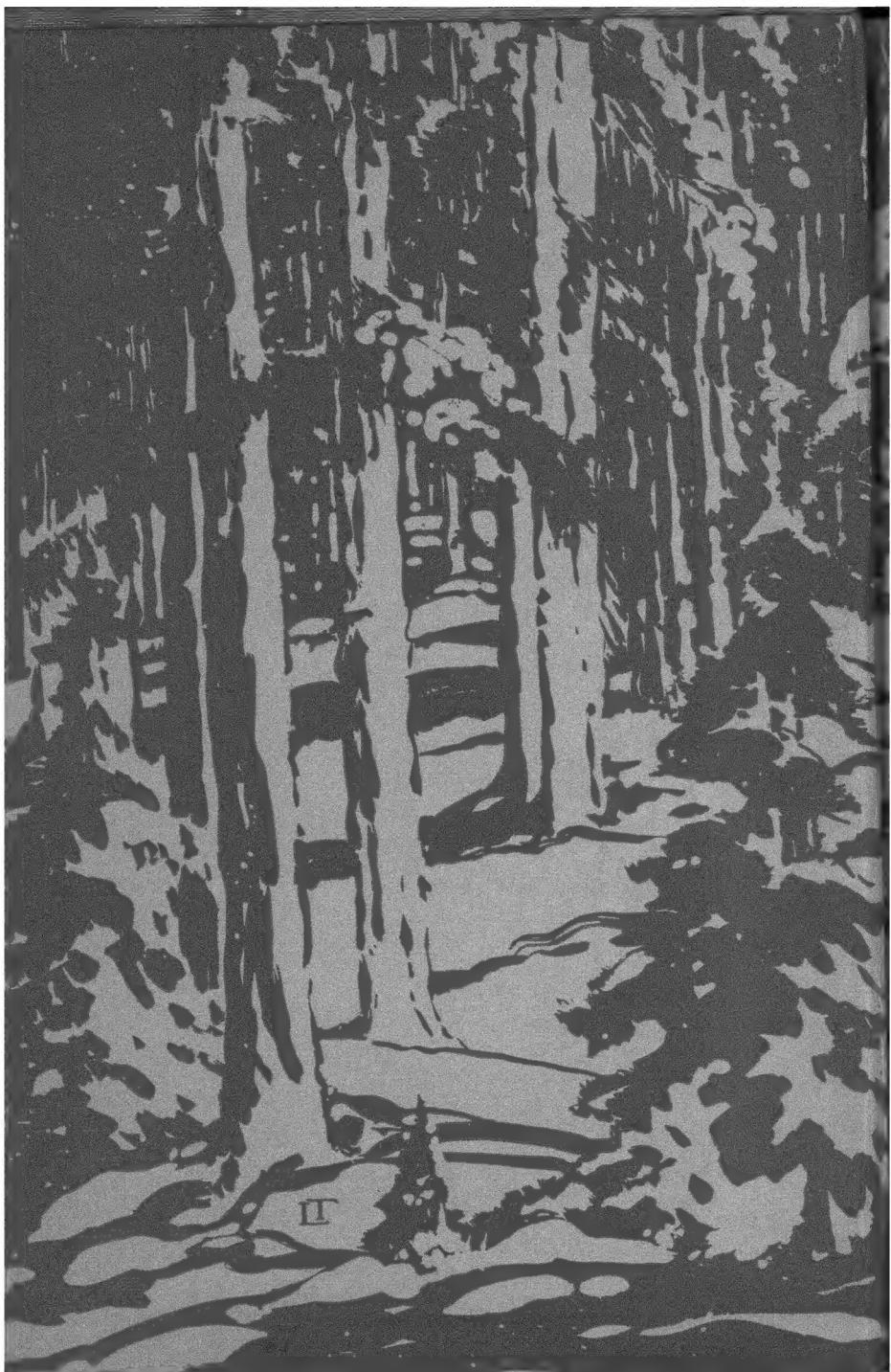
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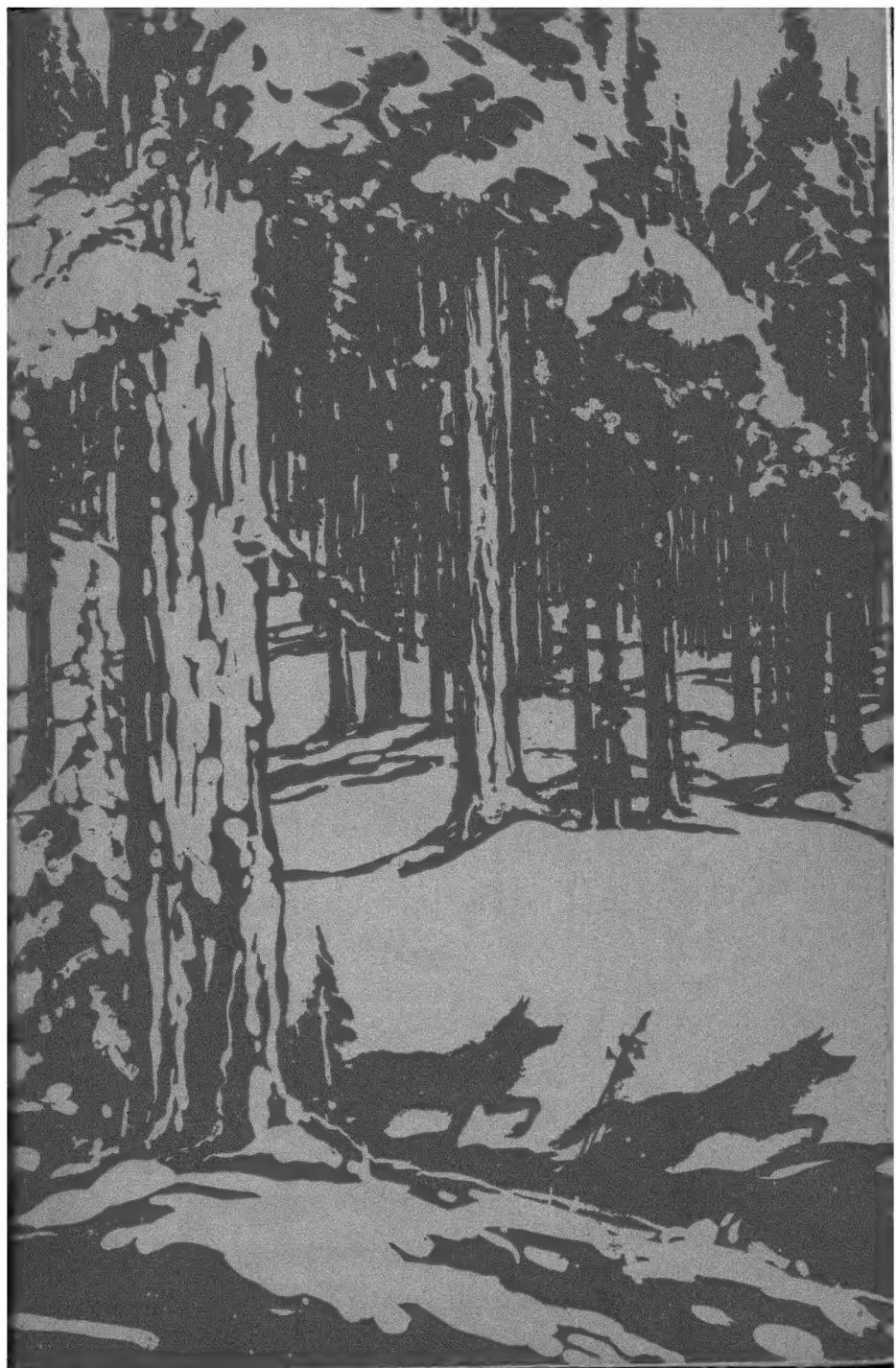
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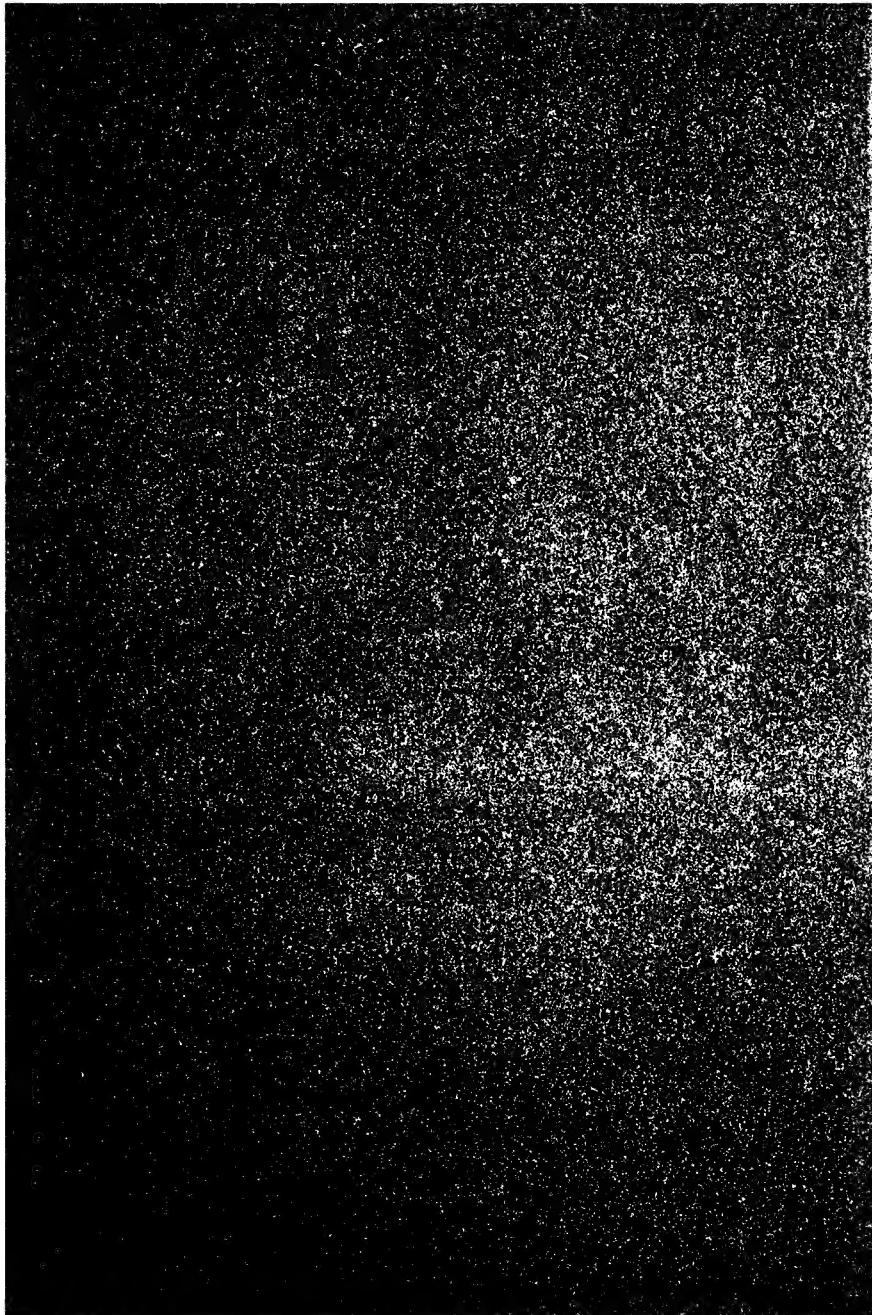


GRAY MCCLINTOCK

CROWELL







ITINERANTS
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TIMBER LANDS

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BY
GRAY MCCLINTOCK

THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY
NEW YORK

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE VAIL-BALLOU PRESS, INC., BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

TO MY WIFE

*Who stood by me in wolf days,
and helped me keep many an
itinerant from the door*

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THE LIFE STORY
of
TWO TIMBER WOLVES

ITINERANTS OF THE TIMBER LANDS

1

WOLF NEIGHBORS

MY boys and I had discovered the den, the November before. After giving it studied scrutiny from a jut of rock on the edge of the foot-hill, we had journeyed home, feeling rather good in the belief that we had passed up one domestic problem without making ourselves a menace and a nuisance. We knew that if we kept away from the neighborhood, and persuaded the dogs to stay off the bench lands above the prairie level, that same pair of wolves would return, or some of their pups would use the secluded spot with its commanding view from the rocks in front for a home during the coming season.

One evening later in the spring, I happened to be

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down near the ford the men were using to cross over into the foothills, when I located the tracks of a full-grown wolf. The traveler had come down out of the foothills and was heading in the general direction of the ranch house. The silence of the dogs, however, convinced me that, if it had been in her mind to lure any of them away from their path of virtuous duty, the attempt had fallen flat.

Two nights after this we were sitting on the west gallery waiting for the rising moon, when from the Sassalas Rock, whose great shoulder is thrust into our faces from the Selkirk range, came the long clear notes of the mating call of a female wolf. She was sending out a message to some hoped-for itinerant of the opposite sex who might be journeying thereabout.

Up at the kennels behind the corrals, Carthew Kind, the collie stud dog, answered her with the same plaintive appeal she had intoned in her effort. He knew instinctively that, when the mating season comes, the female wolf will call for a mate, and if none of her own kind offers himself as a candidate for her affections, she will readily make herself agreeable to a rancher's dog and endeavor to

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lure him away from his natural life and domestic instincts.

For several nights the wolf called, shifting fast over the country to the west and in the foothills. Early in the evening we heard her down the range a couple of miles, and close to the timber on the Dry Fork. In an hour or less she was out on the prairie and on one of the bluffs in the big pasture. This program she duplicated for several nights. At the end of the week we were riding home from the pasture, my wife and I, when we heard her call once more. Her cry sounded as if she were almost discouraged, but before the echoes of her funereal notes had died down, away to the south from the crags and rocks of Rosthern Mountain there came an answering call. Almost immediately her notes changed from the long dirge to the snappy, staccato yelps of a coyote pup. Her prayers and her call had been answered. As soon as the hysteria of her joy had subsided, her call took on the more dignified triumphant note of a worthy mate to any wolf.

On the morning following, I rode to a point on the butte across the river where, with my glasses, I could cover the territory and the exact location of

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her den. Luck was with me. I had hoped to be able to discover and study the wolf and her mate some time before the mating had concluded, but I had managed this occasion to time my observations with their beginnings. From somewhere in the southern foothills she had found a mate, and was bringing him to her home in broad daylight. This was a tribute to our watchful desire not to interfere with any of the people of the wild within our district.

As they climbed the hill together and cautiously approached the opening of the den, the female dropped back to let her lord and master survey the situation with its suggestions of safety as well as the chances of danger in its location.

The dog wolf advanced a few feet and then, with his nose, absorbed all the previous day's history from the various odors he gathered. Some gave a promise of adventure; others were provocative. In general, the wolf seemed satisfied and pleased. This is the first suggested decision in the choosing of a den. The sire must be pleased. As he moved about the place he reflected the emotions his discoveries impressed upon him.

A wandering coyote had registered in passing.

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This was irritating. Possibly many of them had encroached on the territory. His growl of disdain, and the force he gave to the scratching on the turf of the rock, indicated his estimate of a poor and despised relation. The coyote is the poor relation of the timber wolf, and he may weakly admit he is greatly despised, but he can always have the assurance within him that he is quite the equal of any timber wolf in mentality and cunning. More than that, he may be proud of the fact that both males and females of his family are invariably fertile. Their ability to reproduce their own is unquestioned. There are no old maids among the coyotes. The coyote has always been so much cleverer than the human, that his numbers have continued to increase in spite of the fact that civilization has surrounded him.

The den had been invaded during the winter. This was evident from the multiplicity of scents prevailing. Both wolves approached the mouth of the cave and smelled it keenly. A fox had abused his right to decency, but then a fox is always a dirty little wretch in his personal habits.

The big wolf caught a fleeting scent that alarmed

him. His mane roached stiffly and he followed cautiously the leads his nose indicated. Eventually it died out. A mountain cat, sometime in the past, possibly before the leaves came and the new spring perfumes had saturated the air, had visited the district and investigated the den.

A wolverine had spent a night there, and the glutton had finished his meal in the farthest and darkest corner. After close inspection, the wolf apparently decided there was no immediate danger from any natural source and no further objection to the use of the den for the season, and so he instinctively stood aside while his wife started in on the preliminary housekeeping.

The female appeared to be very much in love with her new-found spouse. She would dig and scratch at the interior of the den, then emerge from the darkness at intervals to play with and maul her husband. Apparently that sort of love-making did not entirely appeal to him. It was a little strenuous at times, and from a distance my opinion was that if some of the energy expended in play had been applied to making ready the home, the example would have been more impressive. The big dog wolf gave

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no sign that he was interested at all. At times he would walk over the edge of the hill and look across the prairie into the distance, as if gauging the possibilities the open country afforded for battle, for escape, and for a food supply.

This was not his country. His mate's country was foothills, the fastnesses of the mountains behind, and these open stretches before him. His was the heavy timber lands of Idaho, and the higher, denser brush country of the Sierras. He could live here, and thrive; he could live anywhere, but his wits would have to aid him. His pursuit of romance had taken him far afield.

He was a big yearling; an early spring pup, as was his spouse. His coat was a marvel of dark gray but little lighter in color under the belly than across the back. His apparent disposition gave promise of a reasonable domestic relationship, but a wolf has a very elastic mentality. He was a killer, and one's sympathies can always safely go with the female. She had picked him up and was taking all the chances from such a covenant. He was typical, however, in all angles of his wolf nature. As a loving husband, however, he was a failure. That was evident.

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As a provider, little could be determined by observation, for they hunted together at night for a period, and slept most of the day. If they were idling outside the den, she could never persuade him to allow her to lie down near him. If she insisted on this there would be threats and growls, and he would drive her off. As she became heavy with pups and the hunting was a task to her, on occasion he would bring in a part of a carcass for her, and as she feasted he would stand aside and demonstrate his prowess, in a series of struts and scratchings on the ground beside her. It was a brave showing of valor, fidelity, and husbandly righteousness, but its impression on the female was doubtful. Within her had been born the distrust a female wolf has of her mate. This is one of her hates. She cannot, will not, be patronized.

When her pups were born he gave the first evidence of the natural care the wolf has for its young. In the case of the dog wolf, this lasts but for a very short time. He was attentive to her wants while she was laboring, and as is often the case in young females of the dog family, this period may last for

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from ten to forty hours. He brought her in a new-born calf and tore the hide from it, to show his interest. For the next meal he grabbed a marmot and then forgot to save her more than the rump, for it had a taste that appealed to him. That night he carried a lamb alive for ten miles so carefully that it was practically unhurt, so that in the kill she could have a drink of refreshing blood. He had been a typical wolf in the test of devotion to his spouse and his new family.

For the next month he was gone almost continually. His threat of fidelity was merely a passing whim. He was not so inclined and his independence was to the mother of his pups mere impudence. Being a wolf she had expected it, and was not at all disappointed.

His general appearance denoted the sum of his experiences. He was gaunt and hungry looking, footsore, crippled in his toes, and showing all the evidences of battle. With the instinctive methods of the defense of her young, the female always took the precaution to back into the den that she might ever face the sire of her puppies. The threat and

taint of cannibalism continually pursues and haunts the wolf mother. Instinct warns her and suspicion seems to confirm the danger.

However, nothing happened to warrant her fears. He always stalked away to a near-by hollow on his return to her, to clean up and rest. As a tribute to his spirit, she would hunt for him, always bringing in, as some of his dainty meals, the smaller animals of the ledges and canyons of the rocks.

At two months of age, the pups were out, taking their first lessons on life from their mother. She taught them to depend on neither their sight nor their hearing, but to use their noses for all purposes. She brought in a rabbit, taught them the scent, and then carried it away to hide that they might use their powers of smell and identification. A marmot she used to show them how to dig and open a burrow. She showed them how to stalk and creep on their prey and how to handle a kill too big to drag away.

She was away one day when the first alarm came to them from an unseen, but yet a perfectly apparent enemy. They were playing around the area before the entrance to their den, when a strange smell came floating down the wind. A wolf may dis-

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trust his eyes; he may never depend on his hearing; but his sense of smell always serves him keenly and efficiently.

The mother had fully warned them to rush for the den on the first scent of a new danger, and this they did as fast as they could tumble out of sight. A hound dog came baying up the valley to join his master, who was making a passage across the foot-hills. The man had passed the point of rocks where the den was located before the hound joined him, and so the pups were saved from the death that might have been theirs. That night a hound dog was lured from his home ten miles away and worried to death by a she wolf within a few yards of his master's house. The law of the wild was being made effectual. Two days after this, four white-faced calves, belonging to the same rancher, were killed, purely in wanton fury. The retaliatory law of the wolf family, which makes man their continual enemy and a sworn destroyer, was being practiced. Wolves will fight for their own, and in doing so will keep within the laws of the wild, but they are lawless and devilish in their ethics of retaliation. This to their own undoing, but it is a trait of nature

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running throughout the dog family. An injury is a slur on their conceit which is never satiated short of destruction.

Conceit in an animal? It sounds ridiculous. Conceit in a dog or wolf? Some time, watch a procession of dogs following a female dog, and note the motley of expectant lovers. You are likely to see as many poor little shrimps of poodles tagging along as you will be to see real dogs; but every one of the little culls will have the idea that somehow, if he can get close enough, he may be the chosen lover. Their lives may be continually in danger, they may be torn to pieces in a fight, but they journey along entirely oblivious to danger, full of conceit as they are empty of discretion.

Conceit in a wolf? More than half of the herd raids are caused by she wolves "showing off" before their mates. They will round up a herd of young cattle to choose a kill, merely for food. Invariably the she wolf starts the raid. She may make a bungling kill, with the result that in some way her mate punishes her or derides her. With a terror born of insane rage she starts in to kill, and promiscuously

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her destruction is manifest. Little wonder that a den of wolves in a district is a tax on the flocks and herds not to be tolerated.

Monte Gray rode over to our ranch along the mountain trail, crossed the Okotoks at the Red Ford, and as he came up the deep lane he held up his horse to examine some tracks that had been laid in the dusty road the night before. We had seen him lean over in his saddle to study the markings.

"Davis, man, do you know there's a pair of wolves been crossed your lane early this mawnin'?"

"Yes, Monte, I wouldn't be surprised at any wolf story I heard, for I know the wolves; know where they are denned up, know much about them, and have just been waiting till I knew for sure that they had raided, then I was going out to get them. I want to save the pups for some zoo societies in the East, but the old wolves can go."

Three days after that, four men with guns and shovels rode across the coulees into the foothills and, locating the den, started in to dig. Two of us had noticed the wolves sneaking through the rocks as we were climbing the big hill at the ford, but we

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knew that the pups were still in the burrow. We got them out alive and now they represent the wolf family in five different zoölogical gardens.

The old wolves did not tarry long after the pups had been taken, but, before going, the female gave us one more evidence of her love for her pups. She had traced them from the hill to our ranch, and located them in the granary in the stable. Patiently and determinedly she had started to dig them out. She went down below the foundation in the hope of reaching them that way, but the cement floor in the grain bin, put there to keep the rats out, prevented her getting through. Then she started in to scratch through the siding, but the dogs woke up at the noise she made, and she loped off to think it over. She next tried to lure the dogs to chase her, but the training they had received kept them in safety. Finally, she joined her spouse and they shoved off to the northeast.

2

LEMUS AND RADA

IT is a big night's run from the eastern slope of the Selkirks to the Cypress Hills, either for a wolf or a saddle horse. They say it can't be done. Maybe not, but it can be tried, and that means something. Lemus and Rada tried it, but they failed. However, it all is in the story, which is worth telling. Now about these names.

Lemus and Rada, as names, mean but little save that the Crees use them as nicknames for children who make themselves a nuisance about a camp. Bad, unruly, shameless, is the full interpretation of the words from the Cree. Here they are being associated with the two timber-wolves that left our place and traveled, as most itinerants do, with little responsibility and no special aim in life save to exist, and to remove from place to place, district to district as outlaws, obeying few codes save their primal in-

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stincts and the insatiable desires to kill, and eat, and to propagate their species.

They tried to make the run from the Selkirks to the Cypress Hills in one night, but many things intervened to check their pace.

Rada had lost her pups. Her anger and hatred of those who had contributed to this loss did much to slacken her strides. More than once she stopped to investigate a wandering scent borne in to her from the night wind. When the man scent would assail her she would stop and growl her rage. Deep down in her nature she nursed the revenge she had planned. The days would come and the nights would shelter her, when she would take toll of man for this wrong selfishly imposed on her.

The wolves ran a hard keen gallop, the most of the night, at last stopping at the corrals of a homesteader in the early hours of the morning to kill a calf, new-born and tender. They carried it to the wood lot on the edge of a coulee, and broke their fast. In taking the calf, they roused the house dog, but as soon as he got the scent of the marauders and saw the kill his haste to eliminate himself from the picture by crawling under the house assured them

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that little fear of a disturbance was to be anticipated.

Morning found them leg weary and in an open country, with homesteaders' dwellings dotted here and there in dangerous profusion. Their presence in a settled community and their lack of shelter made their exposed rest a danger. It would not be long before the breeze that came with the sun would carry their scent along in the direction they were traveling, to emphasize their presence and enhance their danger.

They had lain down behind a rock on the edge of a small butte, possibly five miles from the breakfast kill. Already the breeze was carrying the word of a slaughter to the prairie people. A coyote on a distant bench roused himself, threw his nose in the air to gather the general direction, and then headed to the west to investigate. He had not gone far until he ran into the tracks and scent of the wolves. Here was the presence of a menacing danger too great to be disregarded and, as he hurried away from the discovery, he gave a warning note to all his own to shift, and shift quickly, for reasons they might discover.

The wolves lay quiet until the morning sun

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warmed them into a drowsiness that could not be shaken off. Lemus stretched himself on the prairie grass and went to sleep immediately, leaving Rada to watch and drowse as best she might.

The female of the species may be more deadly than the male, but she is infinitely less selfish. Also she is ever more alert, more cautious, more cunning, and more resourceful and reasonable in her methods. At the same time, she is apt to be more hysterical and impulsive, and where the safety of her mate and her pups is concerned, heedless of her fate unless and until their safety may be assured.

They were in a farming settlement. That made their problem less acute. The barbed-wire fences would prevent riders from following, if they were discovered. The herds of cattle would be smaller and there were no range bulls to reckon with. There was little possibility of wolf-hounds, those great battlers so often to be found about the ranch houses. The only immediate danger was the scent carrying to a farmer's dog to alarm him into attracting the attention of his master. This would mean the rousing of the active mind of the man-

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animal who was so resourceful and persistent an enemy.

Whatever the danger, it would come from the east. The ever-present west wind was carrying the evidence of their presence and, unfortunately, there was a greater settlement in that direction. As Rada drowsed she instinctively turned the matter over in her brain, to decide at last that there was little to be feared in a district where man surrounded himself and his home with barbed-wire fencing.

After a couple of hours of restful sleep, both wolves were roused by a violent man scent that came hurrying down the wind. Lemus sprang to his feet and peered carefully around the rock, catching the scent full as he did so. The hair on his neck roached, more from a sense of danger than of anger, while Rada shouldered in close beside him. There was a combination of alarms. The acrid, not unpleasant, scent of a horse and the peculiar nauseating odor of man became more pronounced directly in the west and up the wind. A light rattling came within the range of hearing, and a moment later the menace was revealed as a farmer's boy and girl driving to

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school with a horse and cart. As they passed down the trail within a few feet of the rock, the wolves backed out of sight, while the pony, catching wolf scent, snorted and shied and bolted from the unseen danger.

Refreshed after his long sleep, Lemus seemed in a playful mood. He stretched his legs and back, then clawed playfully at his mate. Rada joined his mood, and they played and rolled on the prairie like pups for fully half an hour. There was a creek flowing sluggishly near them, and they went to drink together, a most unusual proceeding, and one meant to convey, even to themselves, their utter contempt for the apparent dangers about them. They slept at intervals the most of the day and, as the evening closed down, their hunger drove them into action again. Rada's preparations for the next long run, through a settlement infested with dogs, involved a peculiar and mysterious procedure that has ever puzzled students of the nature and characteristics of the female wolf. Near the rock, which was in one corner of the pasture, Rada discovered a cow-dropping, fresh enough to smear and daub. Deliberately she seated herself on her haunches in the

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center of it, and when she rose it was evident that she had for a time succeeded in smothering out the odor that distinguishes the female from the male wolf. At a sacrifice of her wolfly pride she had made their journey and entrance into the hills less dangerous.

The Cypress Hills are a series or succession of buttes heavily crowned with scrub and balsams. They are not high, and the extent of their spread is not great, but the rough terrain and the rocky outshoots have ever made them a favorite haunt of the roaming timber wolves. There are about four of these natural camp grounds for wolves in Saskatchewan, so located that on the natural run from the mountains to the heavy timber country of northern Manitoba and Ontario they fit well into the itinerary of the travelers. In the old days any trail was a good one to a wolf, for the Indian was no special enemy, and the trapper was interested in the more valuable furs. The times had changed, however. The buffalo were gone. There was a different and more aggressive type of the man-animal to be met and feared. There was a something he held in his hands that would bark and kill from a distance. This new

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danger was vital to the lives of the wolves, and virtually the only one that interested them in the later generations. Then there were the traps that bit cruelly, and broke their legs or held them fast. The settlements were closer together, and the maze of man smells was forever disquieting.

Lemus and Rada were on the right trail—from the Selkirks to the Cypress Hills, and from the Hills northeast to the Q'appelle Valley with its heavily timbered borders. A wolf might den up there for a time and safely take toll from the neighboring herds; but not for long. The government herd at Indian Head had been raided too often by wolves in the past. There were real wolf hounds at the big farm, but, of course, some danger must be defied, for the runs were hard and long, and there was always the nerve-disturbing danger from hysterical dogs and suspicious men. When rests on the sandy soil could be found, the scents were diluted and blurred.

There was always some added protection, too, in a close settlement because of the presence of the inevitable skunk. These animals always locate about a settlement, where there is a chance of a raid on a farmer's chicken pen or the rabbit hutch of a

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village boy. One skunk, defiant, active, and nervous is sufficient to hide the presence of an army of marauders as effectually, and in somewhat the same fashion, as the morning mists will hide away the rising sun.

These yearling wolves had never been over the trail before. They had been born on a bench in the foothills, and had grown and lived their days within sight of the snow peaks. Now, on their first pilgrimage, with only their instinct to guide them, they were as confident and established in their direction and the measure of their safety as if they had been across the country many times. A young wolf is, of all creatures, the most conceited and with a perfect right.

In any study of wolves there must ever enter the fact that wolves have, above the natural instinct, a higher or reasoning attribute of mind. If this were not evident, the wolf as a killer, a marauder, and a pest would be even less interesting than any of the other creatures of the wild, for he is a dog in nature and substance. With that attribute in mind, a certain point should not be overlooked. Just what decided Lemus and Rada to take the open run to the

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east, instead of remaining in the mountains and foothills and under cover from the danger of man? There was a reason. Lemus was a yearling wolf. He would not reach his full size, strength, and weight for two years more. In a fight with heavier and older wolves he could not hold his own. The mountains and foothills had many old sires who might tolerate a young wolf for a season, but would kill one old enough to have some defined thought of love making. He knew that as a young suitor he might be favored and courted by the females of all ages; and he would be just as sincerely hated and as surely despised and destroyed by the sires and mates of the female admirers. Lemus had to leave the haunts of his puppy days and take his mate with him.

To establish his direction, the first law of travel among the people of the wild was made evident by his decision. The wild will travel east and north. That is to say, they will head in these directions with a defined purpose and pursue their course to some definite destination. Their journeys to the south and west are more in the nature of an irresponsible drift. There was another element that entered into the

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problem affecting Rada. It chiselled keenly into her sense of security and inspired her haste. The mating season would soon come again, and if there was no settled district—no location or den to be frequented or established—she might find herself without a mate, or she herself might yield to temptation, and wander off with a new mate. A lot of things may and do happen in the lives of wolves at mating times.

Before Lemus and Rada reached the hills, they discovered many evidences of the depredations of old and lawless wolves in the district they were passing through. In these hills, one pair of itinerant wolves would need sharpened wits and courageous heart. In one coulee which ran diagonally across the open plains there were the remains of four steers, which undoubtedly had been herded into the creek bottom and slaughtered in wilful abandon. There was no doubt of this, for they had each been hamstrung with one bite. Only a wolf of full strength can cut through this tissue; while the condition of their carcasses made it certain that they had been killed at the same raid.

All about the scene of this slaughter, the tracks of horses and the man scent testified to the presence

of mounted men. This meant a warfare waged against all wolves. A raid of this nature and of these proportions was new to Lemus and Rada. They had killed; they had taken their meat from many a herd, and with but little discrimination; but to kill in this fashion was new and senseless. They had been overlooked in the raid in the herds of the foothills, that decided the war against them but a week before, but desperadoes have a convenient memory.

The wolves lay down in the center of a close copse of willow, for the early morning hours, and slept as well as their tired bodies and aching legs would allow. Several times they were wakened by strange sounds and smells; often enough to test the patience of Rada, who, more nervous and temperamental than Lemus, resented the intrusions.

One time a jack rabbit, chased by a coyote, jumped from the prairie to attempt a hiding in the copse. He landed almost at Rada's nose. He did not detect the presence of the wolf until it was too late. Breakfast in bed. Life in the hills seemed to have its advantages.

Indistinct smells of wolves who had denned up came now and then on the breeze that flowed and

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eddied among the hills, having no general direction to suggest a location. Rada seemed more sensitive to these odors than did Lemus. She had located another, and to her a disgusting, odor—that of a denned-up wolverine. All the hate in her nature for killers of the weasel family was aroused. She started to search for the nasty beast, but sharply Lemus called her back to his side. Together they moved out to the prairie which at that point sloped away to a shallow ravine. The breeze here was filled with the odors that denoted more than one den, some occupied, and others untenanted. The old wolves were here, the killers had denned up, and there was a war on against them. This was no place in which to abide for long. Lemus, his nose in the air, was trying to locate some one direction from which the scent was coming. He seemed not to be able to satisfy himself, and the wolf nature, impatient, reckless in his battles as in his loves, asserted itself. He gave forth one long-noted call for a mate. While it was a challenge to battlers that might be quite able to defend their own, it was without fear. It was more. To humans the act would have been classified as "a bad break," unnecessary and dangerous. A wolf howl in

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the daylight, in a country where a war had been declared against wolves, was indeed a call to arms. Lemus would be penalized for this; and he seemed to sense his mistake. He did not wait for an answering call. Possibly he did not expect it. Probably back in his brain he conceived the idea of a defiance to the community laws of this group, by calling a flirtation with the mates of the wolves he knew were about. It would be well to shift ground, if only to save Rada. They drifted back in their tracks for a few yards, and then springing to one side they skirted the buttes in the immediate locality. For a mile they ran in the open, heedless of the danger, not only to themselves, but of the evidence they were leaving behind—an indiscretion that would merit a communal punishment.

Leaving the open country, they climbed between two buttes, and prepared to spend the day on a shoulder from which they could scan for miles the country to the east of them.

They had callers early in the day. Two females came through a coulee, upwind, and did not notice Lemus and Rada until the dog wolf walked out of the brush above them and quickly made to their

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side. Rada followed to the top of the bluff, and, little concerned in the crude attempts of Lemus at love making, watched from above. The interview did not last long. The younger wolf was shy and frightened, and the older one was not interested in Lemus, the stranger. It was evident Lemus was less interested in the wolf than he was in the community of which she was a part. He turned from the females to sniff the air whence they came. Eventually, the callers turned back over the ground they had traveled, and their long gallop quickened into a run. They had news to tell.

Rada had her toilet to make, for the cow manure had dried into the hair of her buttocks. When the sun was high, she went down to a sandbar by the water, and by dint of strenuous action in the gravel, and frequent dips in the river, she succeeded in cleaning her body to her own and Lemus' satisfaction, for when she returned to his side, he rose to greet her, playfully mauling her with his open jaws.

Both wolves were gaunt and hungry. One jack rabbit is not enough to satisfy two such appetites as Lemus and Rada enjoyed, and that was all they had

had for breakfast. There were no cattle and no riders in sight. It looked as if they would have to be satisfied with another rabbit; so they looked the prairie over for the signs of one. Just then, from out a narrow, deep coulee there ranged a small bunch of spotted antelope. The beautiful little creatures came fearlessly along, heading for the pasturage south of the hills, entirely oblivious to the presence of danger. A coyote beyond them frightened the little deer, and they stampeded. Lemus and Rada worked quickly down the buttes, keeping out of sight; and, as the antelope came close in, they rushed for the buck of the little herd. They did not attempt to seize him at once, but separating him from the rest, they headed him in close to the hills.

The kill was a clean one, and Rada flushed her appetite with fresh warm blood. They had not eaten long and were far from satisfying their cravings when their nostrils were assailed by the scent of wolverine. All the spirit and flaming rage of both wolves were aroused. They sprang to face the indecent enemy. In a moment the wolverine appeared, coming down the butte. If he heard the growls and threats of the wolves, he paid little heed to them, for

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he came on fearlessly to share their kill or claim it as his own.

It is not generally known, but there is not one of the major group of killers but will give up his meal to a wolverine. The wolves will hardly ever fight him, and never alone; the cats will swear and spit and threaten, but they will give up their feasts. All the bears will abandon their kill on his approach, seemingly too ethical and dignified to notice him or his demands.

As the unclean, ugly beast approached, he joined in the growls of protest and threats. His jowls were frothed, and his small devilish eyes revealed his satanic nature, but he kept coming. As Lemus and Rada backed away from the kill, and the carcajou neared it, a drama on the stage of the wild-folk was all set for action, when something happened.

From around the butte, possibly two hundred yards away, two riders, accompanied by three stout Airedale dogs, appeared.

The wolves rushed for the hills and were out of sight before the dogs got well under way. The latter had the wolverine to worry and kill, however, which was a great satisfaction.

3

THE BATTLE OF WITS

LEMUS and Rada did not stop running when the men were out of their sight. They would have enjoyed watching the fight between the wolverine and the dogs, but they had troubles of their own. They were in a strange district. The Cypress Hills, although an ideal spot for wolves to den in, was not so extensive but that it could easily be surrounded. That the battle of wits between the men and the wolves was on, there was no doubt. Lemus and Rada had seen the men; had been seen, which was worse, and altogether foreign to the precautionary measures generally adopted by wolves. This sight of the wolves by the men placed a definite handicap on the wolf residents of the district. It would be resented deeply and punished, if possible, with death of the offenders. The itinerants had trespassed several of the tribal laws of the family, and wolves have a fashion of enforcing their code.

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Lemus and Rada had no thought of tarrying for any length of time in the hills; they were passers through, and had no rights that preceded those of the denned-up residents. Lemus' defiant love call of the early morning had been a challenge and an insult to every male wolf in the hills. Then their morning out on the prairie in broad daylight was another reckless evidence of their lack of precaution; and the killing of the antelope fifty yards from cover, when all about them were traces of the war men were waging against the tribe, proclaimed them outlaws, wolves to be destroyed. Of course, they gave no thought to the ethics of their conduct, but that made their future either here in the hills or elsewhere a stormy and an uncertain one.

After a run of about five miles, which brought them to a maze of wolf smells, they slowed down, knowing that no pursuing dogs could single them out for pursuit. They were within a very short distance of the scene of their entrance into the hills, where Lemus' love note, needless and insulting had pealed forth. They crossed a creek, and took a little care to hunt up a spot where the water was deep. There they submerged their coats, hoping to take

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off some of the smells of slaughter. A roll in the warm sand followed, then they hunted up a copse of brush on the top of a bluff, and lay down to rest.

From the air they tried to gain some information regarding the peculiar position they had forced themselves into. All about them were smells, some familiar, some strange. The man scent came wafted in from afar. The denning scent was strong enough to warrant the belief that wolves were all about them. There were no weasel scents—that peculiar nauseating musk that ever curses the atmosphere, and warns the advent of their coming or the imposition of their presence. All the people of the wild resent the presence of the weasel. From the tiny, elongated body of the ermine to the big wolverine, this family of blood-drinking desperadoes is hated and feared. There was never a truce to be declared with them. Being outlaws the weasels recognized no rights, asked no favors, and expected none. As blood-drinkers their bite was as dangerous as that of a rattler. Their long whiskers were always a menace. Dried blood and decayed filth were deadly.

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Blood poison or lock-jaw was worse than the quick death from the rattlers.

There had been no recent killings. It was possible that, after the raid on the young cattle on the western slope of the hills, the wolves, gorged and dull with feasting, had denned up to rest for a few days.

No dog scents came to them. The domestic dog has about him a variety of odors that indicate at times the manner of his life. If he is merely scouting about, his registrations are more numerous. That scent dominates. If he is hunting and running hard, there is another and widely different odor. There would hardly be a dog scent about without the presence of a man being evident. At least there was no danger toward the west and north from the men and their dogs.

Rada seemed satisfied, and stretched flat on the ground to rest and sleep. To Lemus there came at times a new and peculiar scent which he could not entirely define, and which was so strange in its combination as to warrant an investigation. There was the scent of the female wolf, not the stimulating

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lingering odor of mating. Also there was present a tinge of the man smell. There was one other distinct odor foreign to him, but marked and defined, just the same. Carefully he located its direction and stealthily he moved up-wind to locate it.

At the edge of a deep coulee that stretched across the hills, rather effectually dividing them, he stopped and dropped on his haunches to study out the situation. It was still clear daylight. The afternoon sun had gone, but in the north and west the afterglow lent a radiance. There was no living thing in sight. Even the denning and other scents appeared subdued and less apparent; however, the strange combination of smells that had aroused his curiosity continued from up-wind. He crossed the coulee, climbed the far bank, and found that he was not far from the spot where he had first sung out his impudent and defiant love call to the wolves already in the district. Out yonder a couple of miles was the scene of the herd raid. The coyotes had cleaned up the last of the feast.

Out of curiosity he started over the edge of the timber. Just then there came from somewhere to his right a pronounced man scent. Lemus moved

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into some dense willows and dropped out of sight. From the open country a horse and rider crossed the edge of the timber, climbed a little rise of ground, and disappeared. The wolf waited for a little while to see if the man would reappear, and, when he did not, curiosity prompted Lemus to take a risk. He skirted the edge of the timber, religiously keeping out of sight until he gained a point from which he could watch the operations of the man who had already dismounted. It was interesting. From somewhere on the horse a steel trap had been taken and laid on the ground. Lemus had never seen a trap and could not understand, but because he saw the man handle the ungainly thing carefully, he knew that it had a particular meaning and use. If the man used it, then no wolf should go near it.

The man busied himself for nearly half an hour with the trap, but eventually he stood erect, backed away from his work for a moment, then straightened up, lit his pipe, and walked slowly and carefully around the spot.

Lemus could see nothing more of the object. He wondered at this. Its disappearance was not accounted for. It was not on the horse. Now the man

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was doing a strange thing. He walked to the center of the spot, and bent over and placed something on the dust. Lemus' eyes from that distance could not see what it was. This apparently concluded the task of the trapper, and he mounted his horse and rode away.

Lemus climbed to the highest point near him and watched the horse and rider disappear in the distance. As he turned to the west again he caught full in the face the strong, compelling odor of the female wolf in the mating fever. It troubled him even as it puzzled him. This was not the mating season. The scent came down the wind strong, almost too strong to be natural. All the instincts of reckless passion, fighting, punishing, jealousy, and desire roused him to action; but back somewhere in his brain the danger signals were alarming. He turned west again, back to the scrub from which he had watched the man with the trap. He was localizing the scent. Lemus was making a fight between the two elements of his nature—the reckless, passionate hunter of desire, and the shrewd calculating wolf who had witnessed a man busy with an idea and a purpose. Whatever the man had done,

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whatever the desire, meant but one thing to Lemus—distrust.

Soon Rada would come; she could easily track him from the copse on the hill. This scent might be a love summons or it might have something to do with the presence of the man in that particular place. He pushed through the scrub into the open and ran quickly to the spot where the man had been busy.

Cautiously he approached. Here was the source of the wolf odor. Whatever else it was, made little matter. This was the alluring strange temptation. He circled the ground, keeping outside the tracks of the man. Then he became bolder and ventured in closer. The dirt about was fresh. It had been man-handled. His nose to the ground, he investigated. At one point he located the same peculiar odor he had gained up at the hill where Rada lay sleeping. With his paw he brushed away some of the loose dirt to discover a hard, smooth surface that gave off a slight but strange odor. Uncovering it still more, he discovered that the edges of this hard surface had regular serrations. This evidently was something for him to leave alone.

A long, guttural howl from an aged wolf back in the hills greeted his ears. The scent carried by the west wind was being thrust into the nostrils of the wolves back there. Lemus was wise enough to know what that would mean. The males would come gallantly, fearlessly, heedlessly ready to fight. The females would follow, jealous rage mounting into their brains, ready to rend in pieces the bearer of this fateful news to their mates.

Knowing what he had seen of the man and his work, guessing the origin of the scent, Lemus sneaked back to his place in the willow scrub and crouched down to watch. He had not been there long, before, in the gathering dusk, he spied a wolf following up a trail. It was Rada. She discovered him as soon as he moved to greet her. She too had caught the scent of the female wolf the trapper had set out, but dared not investigate it without her protector, Lemus. She preferred to follow up the tracks of her mate. She crept to his side, mauled his ears, against his feeble protest, and brushed and rolled his body with her own in feminine conceit and daring.

A growl out on the prairie roused them back to

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their watch. Rada did not understand what it all meant, but she was content to watch and wait at the side of Lemus for developments.

A big wolf was approaching the source of the scent. His head and tail were rigid and tense. His brain alert to the possibilities of a rival called for no sharing of affections. This new love was to be his alone. He came to the crown of the hill below which, on the far side, lay the trap. Now he gave out his love call—similar to the prolonged defiant note Lemus had uttered in the early morning. Then he trotted down to greet his new love. He caught the man smell about the trap and stopped suddenly. He was afraid to go nearer, but the evidence of a new love was before him and the temptation to investigate further was almost overpowering.

Shortly, he discovered what had puzzled Lemus. The steel of the trap was under his nose. This and the man tracks and the man scent were too great a threat of danger to allow of his adventuring farther. He registered, and then, beside the tracks of the horse as it had journeyed from the scent, he scratched his defiance to all his enemies. As he trotted back to the hills, he encountered a smaller

dog wolf and three females who hurriedly retreated before the menace of the older and bigger wolf. He paid gallant heed to all three, singled out one for special attention, and for the space of a moment made a great bid for her affections, but she was not interested in him. She had started out to find and fight the wolf who was offering such temptation to her spouse. She was in no love-making mood. Without doubt, her mate, if he caught the scent, would hurry to impose his personality on the intruder. She jumped aside, growled her resentment at the old gallant, and hurried over the hill to the trap. She was followed by the other females, all intent on doing their bit of destruction. The man scent made her hesitate for the moment, but her jealous anger impelled her forward. Yonder was the hated evidence of her rival. It was a taunt, a defiance to her. She growled out a threat as she passed the serrated edges heedlessly and stepped on the plate of the trap. She was caught by the right front leg up near to the body, the teeth of the trap biting cruelly through the muscles into the bone. With a whine that terminated in a cry, she pulled and struggled to free herself. The trap held her, and the chain fast

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to the post in the ground held the trap. She was a prisoner to her jealous hatred of an undiscovered rival.

The trapping of a female wolf means a triumph for the wolf hunters.

The springing of the trap was a signal for the wolves to disperse. Without a look further than to gain a realization of the tragedy that might have overtaken any one of them, they fled.

Lemus and Rada lay quiet for a little. There was no occasion for their seeking out any more trouble than had presented itself already in this district. Lemus had learned his big lesson. He knew what the man scent about any certain spot meant. He had learned that the smooth, hard surface, with the strange smell that did not carry far, meant danger to him. Never could he afford to risk an experiment with anything pertaining to man. Always he would investigate where he discovered the man scent, and always would he be cautious in his investigations. The best way in dealing with man was not to remain in his country.

Rada, also, had learned a lesson. Her place was at the side of her mate. He might be vain, master-

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ful, wolfish in his selfish demands, but he was big and strong. Another winter and he might be the king wolf. Moreover, he was wise. He might have been out there with the others, and he might have been the one to be caught. He was not trapped, because he reasoned himself out of danger. Now he was safe—her mate and protector.

Up in the hills the resident wolves were astir. More than one ran to the rise in the prairie to look over the edge and down at the poor sufferer in the trap. The females were getting panicky, and this state of nerves was being transmitted to the males.

It has never been definitely known how many wolves were denned up in the Cypress Hills the summer and fall season of 1904, but there were plenty, before the farmers and ranchers started a war to drive them out. The drive against them was not completed until the spring of 1908, nearly four years after. The reason for this was that the itinerants, or wandering timber wolves, who had always passed across the plains possibly for hundreds of years, had made the hills a denning spot. Coming from the east and the wild timber country beyond the prairies of Manitoba, the wolves would travel

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to the Q'apelle Valley thence to the Cypress Hills, from there to the Valley of the Old Man River, and eventually into the foothills of the Selkirks.

When wolves are moving in this fashion, the toll from the herds is not considerable. The danger comes after the denning up and advent of the pups. The summer of 1904 was marked by many raids made by the wolves upon the herds of cattle; but an even greater slaughter occurred in the droves of brown antelope that roamed the Alkali flats and the plains about the Cypress Hills.

The trapped wolf, after the first spasm of fear and pain, had quieted down. Her struggles to free herself had punished her even more than the first horrible stabbings of shock and pain from the blows of the closing jaws. She realized that she could not free herself, and with that logic of accepting results, ever to be found in the brain of a wolf, she was making the best of a bad job. Her struggles had freed and distributed the scent of the bait so liberally in the night breeze that all the world through the hills was awakened to it. The coyotes which lingered in the edge of the bluffs and in the coulees were astir, and at times were offering their

pæans of joy at the advent of another mating season. A number of them ran to discover what chances there might be for a full-grown, able-bodied, willing coyote to ally himself with a lady wolf. The discovery of the suffering wolf in the trap induced a lasting sense of precaution in the brain of every animal which realized what had happened.

The hysteria of fear among the wolves produced much the same result as would a tragedy thrust into the lives of a community of humans. For the time it completely absorbed them. They gathered in groups, ventured boldly into each other's realms and territories, heedless of results. The strength of the family relationships weakened for the time. The intoxicating influence of the trapper's bait on the sexual weaknesses of the old males led them into indiscretions that were bound to mean certain and serious trouble. There were fights and struggles for mastery brewing. In the small group of possibly fifteen wolves that never before had moved in the communal relationship of a pack, there were six males, whose provocative attitude towards the females, especially the young ones, was bound to

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develop into a warfare, deadly and destructive. If there was in the pack a wolf large enough and strong enough to engender a belief in his own prowess, he would be bound to start the trouble.

Lemus and Rada, from their thicket of willow, seemed to sense a condition, or rather a situation, not of their own making, not in their own program and certainly not of their concern. They were mere travelers, passing through a locality in which the residents had made themselves so obnoxious to their neighbors that a war had been declared against them. The opening of hostilities was against the wolves, and the devilish instincts within them were to promote a further decimation of their numbers by self-imposed destruction.

The mutterings of the opening of war grew into distinct growls and threats. The females drew apart as if to separate themselves from the danger to which noncombatants often are subjected from too close proximity to the frenzy of battle. The fight was precipitated in the usual fashion of a wolf-pack struggle for mastery. A young female whose mate was milling about among the battlers made a rush to his side. Before she could reach him one of

the largest of the males sprang to her side and, with his nose under her throat, sought to turn her away. With a growl of rage she grabbed him by his lower front leg, and with unexpected strength tried to throw him. At that instant her mate reached her side and, like demons, they pressed the attack. This was the signal for general warfare. The little female early withdrew with little or no damage except a torn ear which had been mauled in the very opening of the struggle. Her mate, however, was not so lucky. He had been thrown and, before he could regain his feet, the fighting wolves had set aside their own battles to destroy the one that was down.

The dog family is the only species of animal with this strange instinct to destroy the fallen battler. Even the females will join in this cowardly hysteria, which always ends in death to the unfortunate fighter who fails to keep his feet.

When the struggle started, Lemus and Rada hurried to the scene, Lemus to watch his chance for a battle, and Rada with the devotion of a spouse who could not see the virtue of her mate mixing in a fight which could mean nothing to him save disaster. Neither had eaten for hours, and both were

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hungry. While the fight went on, Rada had trouble in holding Lemus in check. She ever stood before him, alert and watchful. His growls and mutterings gave her an inkling of his intention to get into the mix, so she fawned and fussed over him, trying to divert his mind from the battle. At length she seemed to divine what was in his mind. The body of the slain wolf was lying to one side; the battle was being waged desperately a few yards away; and all the wolves were tearing at two or three warriors who were on their backs. Rada ran to the dead wolf and, securing a hold on the side of its jaw, dragged it to the feet of Lemus. The big wolf picked up the body and, with the same hold on the jaw, wrestled it across his shoulders. Then with his spouse following close behind, he left the scene of the battle, climbed the hill to the east, and from there edged down the coulee that divided the hills, to a spot near the open prairie, where they both ate their fill of the warm flesh of their own kind.

They did not choose to rest or sleep near their food. The night was yet young and Lemus was wise enough to realize that there was always danger where the man scent and the close proximity of man

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himself was evident. Still heading east, the wolves broke into their long stride and at the end of an hour's run had gained the Reserve of Piapot. Here they found a broken sandy terrain with here and there outcroppings of rock and sparse clusters of willow scrub which made ideal denning and resting spots. In any other locality, Lemus and Rada would have selected a comfortable temporary den, and prepared to remain for a few nights to ease and heal their feet, but denning up on an Indian reserve was out of the question. Not that there was any great danger from this type of the man enemy. The terrible, acrid, smoky smell of the Indian could be detected a mile away, and from up wind, five miles. It was the motley throng of dogs always found in every encampment that bothered them. The poor, half-fed curs had an uncanny fashion of detecting the presence of wolves and, from the cries of alarm and nervous fear they gave forth, the presence of the wolves was bound to become known.

They crossed the Reserve, close enough to the tepees to lure some of the camp dogs into pursuit; then they separated and circled back to cover their tracks. The scent of the camp dogs was not keen

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enough to detect the ruse, and as they traveled the supposed track of the wolves, they ran into the trap set for them. The wolves closed in from each side to follow the wretched little dogs, and stampeded them into a fear that ended in howls and cries of disaster. Lemus caught up with a pair of the larger dogs, shook one till its teeth rattled, and promptly destroyed the other, which had dared to show fight. Rada was not so liberal in her treatment of the ones she pursued. The cunning of the trick they had played on the camp curs was quickly followed by a frenzy for slaughter. As she caught the screaming frightened dogs, she killed. In their delirium of fear they lost their sense of direction; nor could they master in any degree the cunning of the wolf. Instead of scattering, doubling back, or hiding, they ran, like the camp children, in bunches and straight ahead. If wolves have any sense of humor (and many wolf men, whose studies of this outlaw have entered the boundaries of the psychological, declare they have), then Lemus and Rada must have had a lot of fun on the Piapot Reserve.

4

RADA THE PROVIDER

IN the dark before the early dawn, the wolves left the Reserve and headed for the bottom lands of the South Saskatchewan. The main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway runs through a corner of the Reserve, and to Lemus and Rada, crossing the rails—that continuous stretch of shining steel—was an adventure, a risk, and an experiment with death. Lemus remembered that in their run from the Selkirks to the Cypress Hills they had mastered three of these man-fashioned rights-of-way. When he crossed the first track, the multiplicity of odors made a jumble of his sense of precaution. Rada had crossed railroad tracks many times in her puppy journeys about the foothill den, and had come to associate them with man in some impersonal fashion, but not as a menace or a threat to her. On the night of their first run from the Selkirks they had met up with the Calgary and McLeod branch

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of the C. P. R., and the crossing was the first big adventure of Lemus' career. His nose early warned him of his approach to a mystery. He could gain a slight scent of man, blended in with the one dominating odor of burnt grease or oil, so pregnant with the undefined and unknowable as to render the mystery uncanny.

Rada, unfearing, ran close to the edge of the grade; then turned to wait for Lemus, who had slowed down to a walk. The big wolf was not easily persuaded. He raised his nose and gathered all the information possible from all directions. No threats; no danger apparent from any quarter. Rada encouraged him. She stood beside the rails to show him how little there was to fear and, as she ran lightly across the ties and disappeared on the other side of the grade, his courage increased. He climbed to the rails and stood beside her for a moment. The steel was polished and smooth. It gave off an odor hardly perceptible a foot away. Rada was down the grade, through the fence, and playing down on the prairie beyond. There was nothing now to fear, and the wolf realized it, but there was much to study and, if possible, understand. It was

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of man—something never to trifle or become familiar with. The next crossings he made, he sprang clear of the steel.

The crossing of the main line at Piapot was the advent of a new experience. The dawn was just beginning to break in the east as Lemus and Rada crawled under the barbed-wire fence that marked the southern boundary of the right of way, and approached the grade. A strange rumbling roar greeted their ears. They stopped to locate its direction. It seemed to come from beneath them. Then it transferred its location to the rails themselves. Gradually it grew louder. Now the steel itself began to complain in snaps and groans.

Just east of Piapot the road takes a swing to the south to detour a shoulder of rock on the surveyed right of way, and runs into sharp curve before it makes the grade at the edge of the Alkali Flats. The westbound Transcontinental hurries along, generally, at this point, and the improved electric headlights throw an awesome glare ahead to dismay the darkness. It was this flash of light, thrown from the roaring black beast tunnelling itself through the darkness, that met the puzzled and frightened gaze

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of Lemus and Rada. To the itinerants it was man, their only feared enemy, rushing down on them in his most dreaded manner to maim and destroy. In their panic they rushed for the open prairie. Rada cleared the barbed wire at one bound, but Lemus was not so fortunate. He did not clear the top wire. It caught his front paws and tumbled him with his belly on the cruel barbs. They cut and tore at him as he struggled to free himself. The roaring train hurtled by, alarming the struggling brute into a frenzy of fear and rage. The greater the effort Lemus made to escape, the deeper the cruel barbs cut. His abdomen was laid open, while the passing train was still roaring at him. If, in its passing, the passengers had chanced to look out of the windows they would have seen a great, dark timber wolf trying to tear himself from the barbs of the fence on the boundary of the right of way.

The train roared away to the west until its guard lights were merely specks in the distance, before Rada turned to Lemus. In the growing light she saw him struggling on the fence, but could not fully define his predicament. Now at his side she understood fully and aided him as best she could by her

sympathy. In his struggles he had ripped open his abdomen, ripped loose the muscles and cords from his loins, and the angle of his body and legs was torn and bleeding profusely. However, he had succeeded in reaching one of the posts of the fence. He realized that he could not get across the wire, and so he laboriously struggled to lift his weight with his one available paw, clinging to the post, to reach a place where he could throw himself backwards. He was already weak from loss of blood. His suffering must have been dreadful, but the will to live, the intention to survive, was sufficient to prolong his efforts for a time.

Eventually, he managed to get both his front feet on the post, and then, by searching with the toes of his hind feet for a hold on a lower wire, he was able to throw himself back, tearing loose from the barbs that were imbedded in body and groin, and landing heavily on the prairie inside the right-of-way. Exhausted with his struggles, weakened by loss of blood and his intense suffering, he lay as he had fallen.

Rada was all attention and sympathy. She licked his chops, fawned over him and in every possible

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way tried to show her sympathy. Not once did she approach his wound. If she smelled the blood, and she was bound to, not by a move did she reveal to Lemus a sign of it.

The old theory that a wolf will always kill a wounded mate whose blood is flowing was being disproved. Possibly there is a vast truth in the claim, and it may be that Rada knew her wolf nature well enough to understand her limitations of love and devotion. She did not venture to relieve his pain by licking and cleansing the wounds. She seemed chiefly occupied in searching out some form of protection for her wounded mate. She scouted around the neighborhood, locating all the points from which a danger might come, hurrying back each time from her excursions to comfort Lemus in his suffering. From a short distance away, a coyote to whom the morning breeze had brought a message of the blood letting, sneaked over as close as he could to satisfy his curiosity regarding the predicament of the intruders. Rada quietly crawled under the fence, and graciously offered her body and her tenderest emotions to the intruder until she got close enough to grab him. After she had shaken him up to her satis-

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faction she turned him loose as a warning to all other such prowlers.

Across the tracks and down on the side of a shallow coulee, Rada discovered an outcropping of rock that might be made into a temporary den. She knew that Lemus would be incapacitated for some time. After the healing, he would be so stiff and sore that it would be days before he could journey as he had been doing. To get him off to some quiet spot where he could be nursed safely was now her most important task. She proceeded with her digging as diligently and effectually as she could, but try as she would she could not be indifferent to the dangers all about her. She must not be seen, and it was nearly sun-up. In the direction from which they had come, about half a mile away, there was a ranch house. She had seen or smelled no signs of men about, but there was a dog scouting around. To the west down the railway tracks there were two houses, but no signs of men or dogs. Possibly it was too early. In the great pasture in which she had located her den there were two vast herds of cattle. She could live here, at any rate, and provide well

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for her husband. The results of her explorations were satisfactory.

Lemus, on her return, greeted her effusively. He seemed to realize the object of her activities and was appreciative. He had been busy with his wounds and, as a result, had checked the flow of blood, and cleansed the deeper barb cuts on the angles of his loins. The abdominal sac had been torn but not sufficiently to endanger his life. Time and quiet would heal him. This visit Rada made to him was needed. There had hardly been time for more than a superficial greeting before the rumbling and growling of the rails began again.

The big silk train that periodically runs over the Canadian Pacific is one of the most wonderful examples of efficient transportation on the continent. The hundreds of bales are brought from the Far East in the great ships of the line. At Vancouver the bales are loaded on special cars for the run across the continent, and the train is routed through on a much shorter time schedule than that of the express.

A big train was hurrying at fifty miles an hour across the Alkali Flats. The siren was blowing down

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at Maple Creek, and the big locomotive was thundering across the prairie, heading straight for the wolves. For Lemus to attempt to move now was to endanger his life. Rada—rather both of them, for Lemus was now alert and watching down the tracks—seemed to sense that somehow they would be safe if they remained perfectly quiet. It looked as if the big engine would surely crush them. It was heading directly to destroy them, but the thought prevailed that it belonged over there on the rails. It would miss them.

Down it came. The great whistle shrieked a warning around the curve. Rada crawled over Lemus' shoulders and hid her head beside and behind him. A crash and a prolonged series of roars, smashes, and shrieks as the cars of the train hit the curve, and the wheel flanges contributed their screams to the din. Then the train passed and the roars died down to murmurs in the distance.

Up at the house behind them a dog was barking. He was active, moving here and there, yelping in his excitement as if herding cattle either into a milking corral or out of one. Leaving Lemus stretched out on the grass of the prairie, Rada slipped under the

fence and into the sparse willow growth to investigate the activities of the shepherd dog. A gentle breeze was blowing from the southwest, and it was Rada's plan to get into it from that direction, so that when her scent reached the dog it would be headed, when it came to investigate, away from the railway tracks and Lemus. If the dog were a female, Rada would have to be very diplomatic in order to lure it far enough from the house to kill it, but if it were a male the task would be easy. In any event, she would have to reach and settle with the dog before the presence of Lemus was discovered. It was a risky thing to attempt in the morning light, but Rada was getting used to risky adventures and specialized undertakings. Dodging and crawling, she managed to reach a point where the breeze would carry the scent of her body directly to the dog, busy in the corrals and yard. He had been bringing in the cows to be milked when he first made himself known, and now he was waiting until it was again his task to herd and handle the cattle.

He was a mixed-blooded farmer's hack, pretending to nothing of breeding or appearance, yet possessed of an intelligence and a cunning that made

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him exceedingly valuable to the farmer as a shepherd and watch dog. He was keen as a razor, young enough to be adventurous, and old enough to have a perfect sense of duty to his master.

He was guarding the corral gate, keeping the milking cows in and the young stock out. His nose was searching out the news items of the morning. There were the usual smells about the yards, uninteresting because entirely familiar. Then came something else.

If dogs could talk: "Well, well, what's this I get from out the west? A lady, indeed! A stranger. Guess I'll have to look her up as soon as I get this stock out in the pasture. Maybe she'll be gone then. I'd better go now. Wouldn't like to miss meeting her."

Quietly he slipped past the corral, and hurried to windward of the stables. Again the scent came to him full in the face. Just out there was to be found a new lady friend. Across the small field he hurried, and at the further fence, stopped again to locate his "find." Farther on and over the edge of a shallow coulee the scent became more pronounced. The progress of his interest kept pace with his speed and

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search. He was ready for any emergency—love preferably; risk if necessary; fight, if valor and courage demanded it.

Rada watched him coming and seemed to anticipate his approach with interest. When he was about twenty feet from her, she stood up in all her perfect wolfly proportions to greet him. At the sight of her, he fled in dismay, but not far. Curiosity compelled him to take another look, and the love spell had seized him. As he turned, she whined and purred and called gently to him. He was shocked with fear, but stimulated by desire. Without coming directly to her, he circled about, crossing past her and then crouched, tense, and ready to spring before her. With perfect good humor she walked proudly to him, stooped down, and breathed her greeting in his nose.

He was a friendly chap, rather a good-looking type of mongrel, an ardent lover, and would make a good companion during the time Lemus was an invalid in the improvised den alongside the right of way. She gently reproved his advances when he carried them too far, for the love season for her was yet months away, and he graciously accepted her re-

proofs, and went on with his courtship. He had been a lonesome dog all his life. Here was the type of a sweetheart he had always craved. There were no dogs within miles of him to compare with this new friend; in fact, none but enemies for long, long distances.

Rada threw herself on the ground, rolled over on her back, and let him indulge himself to the full in her body and scent. Then she tested her strength and the power of her blows as she cuffed and mauled him. More than once while she had him on his back and his throat in her jaws the temptation to kill entered her soul. The dog seemed to sense a danger from such play, and jumped away from her.

Shortly, a whistle sounded from the corral; a call to duty. The dog sprang to his feet and for a moment seemed undecided. This was a new life, a new sensation, a new indulgence, a new adventure. Back there was duty, a dog's life and a dog's master. Duty was calling, however; a time for everything. He was a real dog so he hurried home to his work.

Rada, knowing he would come again, hurried in the opposite direction from where Lemus lay, in order that the dog would not discover her wounded

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spouse. For half a mile she sped, at times giving forth her lover's call of half bark, half cry; and was rewarded by the return bark of her new lover. For the time being her strategy to keep Lemus safe from the alarms about him was successful. But her work was only beginning. The scent loosed on the west wind carried far. Here and there over the prairie came the calls of love-sick coyotes, searching some balm for their lonesome souls.

Rada heard them with dismay. She knew that coyotes were an awful nuisance—a pest to be firmly dealt with. They were such tattle tales. Always would a farmer's dog give them a chase; and wandering farmers' dogs were not desired, could not be tolerated in fact.

She would go back to Lemus for a little while and think of some plan for the elimination of the coyotes. It might mean an added danger to her, but she knew she could by consistent endeavor draw the attention of both dogs and men from her wounded mate. This was the one big thought in her mind.

She gave a last call to her new lover from half a mile to the south, then ran quickly down the wind,

eliminating all traces of the scent and smothering her whereabouts. Soon she circled back to the railroad tracks, crossed them, realizing that this would lose her from her amateur lover, and then tracked back to where Lemus lay.

The poor sufferer needed drink. He was lying quietly, too hurt to be hungry, in too much pain to qualify any sensation further than his actual need of a drink.

As Rada approached he rolled carefully over exposing his wounds and signifying his desire that she lick them. There was no danger now from the taste of the blood, no fear of slaughter or further wounding by the sudden impulse on her part to kill, and so Rada carefully cleansed and soothed the inflamed surfaces. Lemus had not moved from where he had fallen exhausted from the fence. Both wolves realized that he would be in danger of infection if he lay with his wounds on the ground sodden with blood. In a few hours this would be the rankest poison. Lemus had tried to drag himself away from the danger, but the pain made him pause and hope for some help from Rada. She understood what was desired and her mind was busy threading out a

scheme. She tried poking her nose under his shoulder and forcing him over that way, but the best she could do was to turn his shoulders and thrust his body sufficiently to cause him the supremest agony. Down by the fence about ten feet away there was a natural depression behind a rock where she could make a bed and add some little comforts for the sufferer. She went into the hollow and scratched out all the loose stones and pebbles, and then went back to discuss with Lemus the manner of his removal. It would be hard to guess how much discussion there was, or its nature, for it ended abruptly in decisive action. Rada reached down and pushed Lemus gently over on his back, and then, before the surprised patient could protest, she seized him by the scruff of the neck and dragged him on his back uncomplaining to the hollow, where she proceeded to make him as comfortable as she could.

She had just finished the transfer of her patient when the rails began again to sing and whine. Down around the curve a freight was approaching from the east. The big engine was laboring hard, making the slight grade before breaking over into the Flats, and was going slow enough so that an ordinary ob-

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server, watching along the road bed or the fence, might easily have discovered the wolves.

Again Rada crouched over Lemus' head and shoulders, shielding him from the unknown danger. The laboring locomotive, gaining a little headway as it passed the crown of the grade, thundered by, but the long train clanked and groaned, and banged for nearly ten minutes before it had passed.

The two outlaws were having close-up views of man and his workings. They were getting a lesson in railroading, true enough.

All through the long day Rada lay beside Lemus, watching while he slept and trying to make some defined plan to care for and protect her spouse, as well as to provide for his needs.

One of the first things she noted was the fact that the passing trains, with their clouds of smoke, the metallic smells of the wheels as they screamed when the flanges struck the curve, and the peculiar smells of tar and oil that permeated the locality of the road bed, entirely smothered all animal smells, and scents. There was protection in this. Rada tested this out to her satisfaction. Although she was in the face of the west wind she could get scent of no pres-

ence, either of friend or foe. She was comforted with the thought that if nothing came in to her on the right-of-way, little would go out. However, there was but small comfort in the situation. No wolf, wounded or whole, could ever be resigned to the roaring thunders of those passing trains. Danger, uncomprehended and demoralizing in its intensity, was all about. When the night came Lemus would have to be moved across the tracks, under the wires that made the northern boundary of the right-of-way, and to the den she had made for him in the big pasture.

With Lemus located in that comparative security, providing for and protecting him would be an easy task. She had been busy since midnight, and was hungry and tired. Hunting, however, was out of the question now. She crawled close in to Lemus and tried to sleep.

Just as the sun was beginning to drop close to the western edge of the Alkali Flats, Rada was roused by the anxious whines of Lemus, and the shudder of fear that ran through his body. As she raised her head she caught full in the face the peculiar nauseating man scent—the odor that terrifies or mad-

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dens the people of the wild—the smell of sweaty clothes, and the incense of labor and consumed tobacco. It was right at hand, and so intense as to preclude all thoughts of escape. At this moment the rails began lightly to sing, and immediately following came a put-t-t, putt-t-t at regular intervals. The wolves were in a panic of fear and dread, but they lay close and perfectly quiet.

The gas-driven lorry used by the road gang, and loaded with men, was hurrying in the direction of Medicine Hat. The men sat facing each side of the right-of-way, and how it was they missed seeing the wolves was one of the unexplainable happenings. However, they were dusty and dirty, and without doubt hungry, too, and anxious to get home, and so interested in their own conversation that they heeded nothing save the progress of their car.

This last escape from the men decided Rada. She would move Lemus from this danger if she had to drag him by the scruff of the neck, which, by the way, is the most painless fashion for handling all animals. Beyond the pinch of the teeth there is nothing to warrant any protest, and to Rada the idea was quite feasible and permissible. She hadn't

given it much thought before. To pull Lemus a few feet, when she dragged him from the blood-sodden grass to where he was lying now, seemed a natural way to handle him. To haul him up the bank to the road bed, across the rails, over to the fence, and under the wire into the pasture, was another thing again. It was to be a task, but she could and would do it. He had no mind or will in the matter, and there was no chance of his visiting his wrath on her, now, at any rate.

The long day seemed never to end. Rada was nervous, hungry and irritable. True to his natural instincts Lemus was a stoic. He was silent and motionless, save as he bathed and licked his wounds. The great agony from the fresh open sores was gone, but his understanding, instinctive and natural, made him realize that absolute quiet for the next few days was essential. He was wholly philosophical as well. Wolves, possibly, are fatalists. After the first spasm of rage and the primal agony of a wound has been controlled or endured, their emotional nature is buried. In the presence of man, knowing that he has been the cause of their distress, wolves will not, even by the wink of an eyelash, betray their nature

or the substance of their distress. This hurt was a different matter with Lemus. In some indefinite way he seemed to know man was to blame for this mishap, but he was not able to figure out the matter so as to bring the blame to any one or anything other than his own folly.

Rada started hunting immediately the night fell so that it was safe for her to be out. The easiest meals of all to secure—the gophers—had gone into their holes till sun-up, but there was always the chance of a brush rabbit down in the willow scrub or a jack rabbit out on the open prairie. She did not feel much like a chase this night. She was nerve tired and leg weary. The brush rabbits would have to make her meal tonight and, if she were lucky enough to get a big one, the blood would make Lemus a drink and give him sufficient of a meal also.

Again luck was with her. A big buck-John jumped almost from under her feet as she stealthily sneaked into the brush. He ran a few feet then stopped in his peculiarly stupid fashion and gazed about, wondering at the nature of his pursuer. Rada grabbed him by the back, sufficiently hard to paralyze it, and then triumphantly ran to Lemus' side

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with her find. While he finished his meal, she started again to locate her own supper. She did not return to the brush where she had secured the other rabbit, but out of range of Lemus' nose and hearing, she crossed the right-of-way, crawled carefully under the barbed wire and invaded the territory of her dog friend of the morning. She wanted company. She needed diversion. She had supplied the needs of her mate as best she could, had given him all the protection possible for the day; but in her round of duties she had met a very likeable chap who would fit into her needs, and as well relieve the monotony of her watchful days. She had no thought of disloyalty, as she had no desire to disturb the peace of her new-found friend.

She circuited the pasture, running south until she came to the patch of brush opposite the milking corral, near where the morning breeze had first caught up and carried her scent to the dog friend of the morning. The evening breeze, though very light, would carry into the yard, with, she hoped, the same results.

Carefully, after a moment's wait, she crept closer to the corral and gave forth her love call. Not the

long brave challenge of love and mating, but as near in mockery as she could imitate the half-bark, half-call of the female shepherd dog.

There was a smothered bark, and a scramble from under the house, and the friend of the morning came running to greet his big companion of an hour. There was much show of affection from both animals in the meeting. Rada allowed much liberty, not too much, that her respect be preserved, to impress the dog of his limitations, but sufficient to warrant hope and desire of his passions. A moment of this and they were off to hunt. It took some time for the dog to understand that he was supposed to help hunt, not to spend his time in love-making, and a show of affection; but eventually it seeped into his brain that he had a commission to complete, a design to develop, and so he went to it with a will.

He knew where there was always a good chance to get some brush rabbits, but best of all he knew a neighbor who had some real dainties that would tempt the appetite of any sweetheart wolf—some young pigs that had been born a few days before in an open yard, with but a low fence and a cover from the rain to protect them. They had not tempted

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him much when he had discovered them, for he had been taught by the instinct within him, as well as by his master, not to hunt so close to a home for his meals. To his big sweetheart, however, the privilege and license were unlimited.

It was a quick run and a joyous one for both. The mongrel, intoxicated with desire and hope, led the way, straight as an Indian chooses a path, to the log corral and open pen. It was very easy to locate, however, and Rada took some credit for the direct journey, in keeping with her sense of smell and certainty of location.

The dog did not enter the pen or attempt to jump the corral.

Rada stopped her run on the lee of a cutbank to look the situation over. Stealing tiny porkers was a new one. Just what would they do? Could she kill easily? Would they be too heavy for her to take over the fence as she leaped?

Quietly she slipped in close to the pen, and through the spaces between the logs studied the problem. The old sow, lying on her side, had her babies half-buried in the straw as they nursed from her. They had dropped off to sleep after enjoying their dinner. It

seemed mighty easy to vault the low fence, pick out a porker, and dash with it to some near-by brush where she could dine in comfort. It seemed easy—only she overlooked one important detail, the squeal. All the victims of her kills had been silent. This was different.

Lightly as a shadow she scaled the fence, and silently she went close in to make her selection. As she bit its tiny shoulder in lifting it out of its place, the little porker opened its siren as a call for help and an expression of its pain and fear. Quick as Rada was, the old sow was quicker. Before the wolf could make the fence with her victim the sow jumped to the rescue of her baby and seized Rada by the thigh. The wolf dropped the little porker and turned with rage on the sow. The battle was on. The sow dropped her hold on the wolf, as Rada seized her ear and tore with all her might. The fighting methods of the sow placed her at a disadvantage. The pig had not the jaws or teeth to inflict a damage, but her weight was sufficient to punish if she could only use it. Rada held on to the sow's ear, springing backward out of reach of her jaws, and marking her chance to jump clear of the pen. It all seemed so ridiculously easy, that

Rada, holding fast to the ear of the sow, paid little heed to the noise of the struggle and the coughs and squeals of the enraged pig. The little porker, whose squeal had started all the fuss, had discovered again his nest among his brothers and sisters and had fled to it, sore and terrified. More than once the sow had tried to shoulder Rada against the side of the pen, and if she had succeeded, certainly she would have crushed in the ribs of the wolf. The pig was becoming winded in the struggle, for, with a true wrestler's trick, Rada was letting the sow handle all the wolf weight and resistance as well.

The mongrel, who had intended to be a neutral in this raid on the pig pen, lost his sense of discretion in the struggle and was outside barking his encouragement to the wolf. He was so occupied in this sportsmanlike endorsement that he did not notice the approach of the ranch dogs. Before he realized it the two collies were on him, one tearing at his ears, and the other trying to throw him by a hold on his leg.

Rada now had every opportunity to break away from the wounded and winded sow, but wolfish as she was in her rage she seemed bent on punishment. While the dogs outside the pen tried to kill her lover,

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Rada was bent on tearing the ear off the sow. At last, however, when the dog was screaming his fear and agony, Rada leaped the fence, threw herself first on one dog and then on the other with such a tempest of rage that in pure fear the curs dropped her dog friend and fled for the house.

Rada viewed the situation for an instant. Dog friend had a sore foot and leg and one mighty sore ear. Her thigh was wounded and stiff, but beyond the bruise of the pinch there was no damage done. She was still hungry, so she vaulted back into the pen singled out a little squealer, and before the old sow could rouse herself to interfere, grabbed her prize and bore him squealing and crying away.

5

BENTICK

LONG before Rada had finished her first meal of young pig, to which she applied herself in zest, down in the coulees below the pen, she realized that her adventure had been discovered and was being investigated. Of all the wild, especially of the killers, the wolves are the most susceptible to the reactions their activities have upon their enemy, man. This is the result of their extremely suspicious natures, and the shrewd manner of their retaliatory movements. The wolf fights back, until such time as a personal danger is evident. When this has been proven to be defined and complete, the wolf will submerge his ideas of retaliation, and endorse a program of safety first.

The dog friend was wounded and torn. His venture into the habits of the outlaws had brought a realization of punishment. He knew now that virtue had its own reward. He had loved; he had followed

the circuitous paths of questionable desire; now, he had on his body the marks of the beast.

He limped along beside Rada as she carried her stolen supper into the coulee and, while she feasted on the delicate body of the young porker, he busied himself with his wounds. One ear had been badly chewed, and one leg, the bone of which had nearly been broken in the vise-like jaws of the collie, was so painful as to make him whine as he nursed and cleansed the open cuts. He wanted to be off for home; he knew that his adventure had been a mistake; he was sure that in his warm nook behind some barrels under the master's house he would be comfortable and much better off than he was out on the prairie with a wolf.

He got up and walked closer to Rada, but was warned by a growl he dared not resent. He would have to keep his distance. Then he started to climb the bank of the coulee, but Rada had not finished with him. She warned him back to her side and, with drooping tail and averted eyes, he slunk back to resume his place near her.

Up at the ranch, where the raid had been made on

the pigs, there were signs of considerable activity. The dogs had never ceased barking and, as they realized that their alarm had been noted, they increased their efforts to direct the men folk who had appeared with lanterns, to the scene of the struggle. The sow with the torn ear, and the missing porker, together with the tracks of the wolf in the soft mud as she had worried the sow, made plain the story of the raid.

Rada could visualize the record of their visit to the pen. She knew what they would find. She knew what it meant when the collies started on the tracks of the dog and herself, down the coulee sides. She knew why they stopped abruptly when they realized that the men were not following her, and if she took the time to dwell longer on the subject she would realize that her venture after a new delicacy—a supper of young pork—had been a sad mistake. She had not figured on the squeal. She had been too slow in grabbing her choice of the little porkers. Who ever would dream that a big clumsy old sow could be so active in the defense of her young? She had done herself an injustice; but more than that

she had endangered the life of her helpless mate. She had mulled up things into a mess and now she would have to get out of it.

She rolled her face, head, and shoulders in the brush grass, trotted off to the creek for a drink and, after examining carefully the wounds on the sore body of her dog friend, she started on a long hard lopé back to where Lemus was cached behind the big rock on the right-of-way.

Before she crossed the tracks, a thought regarding the dog friend needed adjustment. He had fallen far behind and, to meet him as he came limping along, she had to run back nearly half a mile.

He was as sorry looking and incapacitated as one could imagine, but Rada neither pitied nor censured him. She did want to know his attitude of mind, if possible, before letting him return to his home. He belonged to man, was the slave and friend of her enemy; and if he was true to his dog nature he would be a living menace to her. If he went home and raised an alarm, either tonight or later, or gave any evidence of his knowledge of her presence in the neighborhood, it would mean a doubly evident danger to Lemus. He was the one to be protected. She

knew her prowess; she knew that she was able to cope in cunning with the whole community of farmers and their dogs; but her mate was helpless and would have to be considered in all her schemes of protection.

Rada trotted slowly along beside the wounded dog, keeping between him and Lemus, and gradually heading him so that they would cross the right-of-way, fully half a mile to the east of the big rock. Try as she would she could not rouse him out of his depression and fear. The pain of his wounds, and the realization of his danger oppressed him. He wanted only one thing on earth—the touch of his master's hand, the sympathetic voice of those ever about him, and a freedom from the living menace that he now feared as he had loved.

Together they crossed the tracks, and together they approached the fence that marked the boundary of his home, when, within fifty yards of the house, Rada stopped in front of the dog. She took her nose and lifted his body back on its haunches, stood directly in front of him and looked him squarely in the eyes. He did not return her gaze, but whether from fear or deception Rada seemed unable

to decide. Then she stepped aside and let him pass.

One tense dramatic moment she stood waiting. If he began the alarm by barking she would know he was his master's dog—for a time. If he crept silently to his den under the house, she would know that there still burned within his soul a spark of the love he had for her; at least, a trace of the loyalty most males have for the females. If he barked now his doom was sealed. He could not be allowed to live. If he roused his master and precipitated a chase there was but one thing to do to avert disaster. The man would have to be led away from Lemus. No sense of a greater danger than he was living in should be allowed if she could prevent it, and she thought she could.

The dog did not bark. Rada watched him as he gained the house, saw him turn the corner, and then vaulted the garden fence to keep further tab on his movements. He stopped at the kitchen door and gently whined as he scratched and shook it.

Rada gradually relaxed her tense attitude and dropped on her stomach to reason the situation out. The dog eventually would be let into the house. His body would be examined. Naturally, he would be fed

and his wounds dressed. He was likely now to keep silent; he was safe, but his fear of her would not disappear, and the greater safety of the wolves would be assured. A moment of whining and scratching on the door was sufficient. A light appeared at the window and, as the door was opened, the dog friend of Rada was invited inside, to be lost to her—for all time.

Rada retreated from the garden, over the fence and into the pasture land, as she had come. She was rather content. The incident of the dog friend and her fear of his treachery were after all, merely an incident. Nothing mattered now save Lemus and his safety. She crossed the railroad tracks and entered the pasture on the north side with a view to visiting the den she had prepared for Lemus under the shelf of rock.

The night wind had sprung up from the west, and, as Rada lifted her nose to catch the news items, she had a shock that set her nerves tingling. There were wolves to the west. Down in the Flats, at least, two females and a dog wolf were either passing through or else had located. She caught the scent of cattle in closer than usual, and from the north, as

the wind eddied around the coulees, she got word that the dogs at the ranch where the pig pen had been raided were venturing farther from home than they had dared earlier in the evening.

There were Indians moving now, or had moved during the night, north across the Flats, and there had been a kill somewhere on the edge of the big herd of black cattle. There were no sounds to warrant fear and no scent of man about, save that of the Indians. There was no mistaking these strange, unclean species of the man type. The smoky scent, together with the offensive odor of unwashed bodies, has a meaning all its own. Even a keen frontiersman, whose senses have been trained to an abnormal alertness, can define and name them.

As Rada approached the big rock where Lemus lay, she caught again the scent of wolf, this time directly in front of her, and in the immediate neighborhood of her wounded mate. The visitor was now inside the fences of the right-of-way and possibly, having located Lemus, was approaching to visit him. Rada crouched before the edge of the bank and awaited developments.

She had not long to remain quiet. A big female wolf vaulted the southern fence near the big rock, and then, with every muscle tense and every brain cell alert, approached the wounded wolf. At a glance she took in the situation and, typical of the female of the species, she sympathized, and gave immediate evidence of her kindly intentions.

Without doubt, she had been one of the wolves whose mates had been killed in the big struggle near the traps in the Cypress Hills. Possibly the fight had become so keen between man and the wolves that she had been forced to migrate, and was now journeying alone along the natural route from the Cypress to the great timber country of northern Manitoba.

Rada's jealous anger was roused at once. She wanted to rush down across the tracks and annihilate her rival, but her better judgment told her to use her brains.

Lemus was not in a position to foster a rivalry. The newcomer was not the type easily beaten in a fight. She was built for action, was two years older than Rada, and had forgotten more of wolf logic and reasoning than the mate of Lemus had ever known.

—much more than Rada had evidenced, of late, at any rate.

Rada searched her soul for half an hour, while watching Lemus and the big wolf, for a good reason to be angry, jealous, and devilish. Lemus was resting quietly enough. The visitor was lying on the ground beside him, her nose in the air, trying to locate the items interesting and essential to her. Occasionally she would climb to the crossties and rails and smell them for scents. Then she would crawl through the fence on the south side, and from the pasture would again gather the news items with her nose.

She seemed to have discovered what Rada had earlier noticed; that is, that the multiplicity of smells, scents, and odors peculiar to the railway smothered out all other scents. The reasoning was thus plain. If no smells could come into this area, none could go out. Now for a wounded wolf who could not move himself, and who was too badly cut to be moved without dragging, the safest method for him was to den up for the healing season just where he was.

Back she hurried to the side of Lemus, and gently she took him by the scruff of the neck. A gradual

pull, strong enough to move the wolf, and he was taken aside to make the den clear for further improvement.

Lemus gave no protest. He seemed to understand; but to Rada, from her outlook, there appeared all too much familiarity in the handling of her mate. She was all set to rush in with a protest when the rails began again to sing and whine. Another express was rushing down to meet and destroy them from the west. The big headlight searched out every blade of grass, every pebble, and threw the figures of the wolves into an appalling relief and sense of insecurity. Lemus ducked his head to hide, but the approach of the imminent tragedy was too much for the big female. She vaulted the fence and ran for the brush as the train swept by.

While she was away, Rada approached Lemus, and was received with every evidence of pleasure. He raised himself on his front leg muscles and reached to lick her chops and fawn on her. She did not return much of his affection, but gently looked over and cleansed again the wounds beyond the reach of his tongue. She was busy at this when the big female returned. Rada stepped away from Lemus as if

anticipating an attack; but the visitor, who had, no doubt, known of the existence of a mate, accepted her presence with recognition, but entire unconcern. She was wise enough not to approach Lemus, but proceeded at once with the digging and widening of the den. Rada walked over from time to time to inspect the results. They appeared entirely satisfactory, for she took up her share of the work by distributing the dirt that had been thrown to the surface. The den, after an hour of work, had been dug under the big rock to a point, where, Lemus, extended, would be entirely hidden, and the dirt so placed around as to dam out all the water that might fall off the rock during a heavy rain.

The word "Bentick," for so the visitor shall be named, comes from the Cree language, meaning a sojourner; not one to visit and then depart, but a squaw who comes to stay until, in the destinies of Time and Fate, she is led away into other paths.

Bentick and Rada seemed to understand each other. They were convinced that the care of Lemus was the one great thing in both their lives. Rada was certain that Bentick was much the superior in wisdom, and in their confidences and acceptance of

conditions the suggestions of the older wolf were adopted.

One of the first impressions gained positively by Rada was the virtue of keeping Lemus where he was. Dogs could hardly discover him by scent, and if the presence of the dogs in the neighborhood constituted a menace to him, then it would be the essential play of the female wolves to lure them away if they came accompanied by men; and, if alone, hold them with desire and eventually destroy them.

Together, Rada and Bentick visited the den in the big pasture, but the idea of attempting to move Lemus was abandoned at once. They sat down on the prairie, with their noses into the western night wind, and gathered news items. There were coyotes about. The kill on the Flats near the big herd had not been finished. It might be that a meal for two was still left for them. They had about decided to run over and investigate, when they caught, from almost the same general direction, a pronounced man smell. This, to Rada, was not indicative of any pronounced danger; but to Bentick, a kill and a man smell close at hand were a combination to be investigated at least, but in general to be avoided.

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In the east the dawn was breaking. The wolves went into the willow scrub and hunted the rabbits for a little while. They discovered two of the most used runways; and, as Rada stirred up the little pests Bentick caught them on the fly up the beaten path. They carried breakfast to Lemus, who drank eagerly of the blood, and feasted on the bodies of the victims. There was more than enough for all.

To Rada was given the task of dragging Lemus into the newly fashioned den where he was hidden securely for the day, then as though by some pre-arranged plan, Bentick ran to the east up the right-of-way and at a distance of about a mile she offered to the morning air her scent to distract any dogs that might be of a curious turn of mind.

Rada went back to the fence where she had left her dog friend of the early night before, and left her registration so that if he came out in the morning he would discover her marks and conclude her general direction was far from the railroad.

Both wolves then ran east to converge their lines of direction about five miles away and, together, lay down to sleep the day through.

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THE farmer, whose dog Rada had coaxed into mischief, was puzzled as he discussed the general used-up condition of his pet. The cows were to be gathered up for the milking, but the wounded dog was too sore to make the trip.

"I wonder just how that dog got chewed up so badly," he mused. "He never goes away at night. There must be a female running, and yet I don't know of one for ten miles in any direction. Another thing, there is no one dog around here could use him up that bad. The two collies of Hanson's might have got to him, but where would they catch him?"

"He acted kind of strange yesterday. Was busy hunting and sniffing all around the timber lot. There is maybe a bitch coyote running, but even then he knows better than to get mixed in a bunch of those beasts. He's not ripped as the coyotes leave the battlers. He was only chewed on the one ear and the off

hind leg. Something funny about it. He was bad enough scared when he got home. Darned if I understand it."

Over at the Hanson Ranch the discussion around the breakfast table ran naturally to the happenings of the night before and the raid of the hog pen.

"That wolf must have been a real fightin' fool. It got right into the pen, picked a quarrel with the old sow, and wrestled her by the ear till he had her winded, and then picked out the nicest shoat and hurried away to make out a meal."

"But what about the dog the collies were worrying?"

"Were they worrying a dog?"

"Sure, they were. When I woke and first heard them, they were just beginning to make him holler."

"It couldn't have been another wolf, do you suppose?"

"Not much. The wolf got in his work after. They were at a dog till he hollered 'bloody murder' and then the wolf took a hand. Look at Rex's ear. It is half torn off. That's a wolf bite. Then when we started off down the road follerin' the tracks, the

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dogs were all keen on the go until they got full scent of something bigger than a dog. After that, nothin' doin'."

"Well, Joe Boyd is the only neighbor around here with a dog, but it is too small to steal shoats, and too much of a coward to play around with a wolf."

"But, Dad, supposin' there was no wolf. Supposin' there were two dogs, or even Joe Boyd's dog alone?"

"Don't be silly, boy. No dog of any size would fit those tracks down in the pen. There is a wolf running free around here, and if I am not mistaken it's a female. Get us some horses and we will ride over to Boyd's. If the men are shifting the wolves in the Cypress Hills, as I heard they were going to, this fall, there is bound to be strays running in all directions, and while I don't figure they would stay in a reserve, they might locate for a time in the sand hills to the east or north in the Crane Lake Range."

The saddle horses arrived and Hanson and his oldest boy started for Boyd's.

"I suppose we might as well take Tom Tremont along with us. If there are wolves about they will

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cover his territory, and those bluffs in that sand ridge are going to look good to traveling wolves. Of course, they will be itinerants."

"But, Dad, don't you think they will locate near here for the rest of the fall and winter? This black bunch of Galloway's is the last big herd in the whole province except the Matador on the Saskatchewan, and wolves have never bothered those people to speak of."

"No, son," answered Hanson, "if there are wolves here in any number, which is quite unlikely, they're not here to stay. Passing through, possibly, early in the night, they would be bound to locate our pig pen, as the night wind from the northwest would carry the scent for miles. The wolves, likely, came over to investigate and took the ear off the sow; then, after she was winded in the struggle, stole the little porker and hurried away to make out a supper."

"But what about the torn ear of the collie, and the dog tracks? There was a dog fight, sure enough. I heard the collies wrangling a dog who fought back until he knew he was going to be stretched; then he hollered."

"We'll know more about this when we get over to

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Boyd's. I have my theories, Trubert, but they may be wrong. We'll hear if Tremont has had any experiences."

The horses drew up at Tremont's place, and a whistle brought out the homesteader.

Tremont was a newcomer to the district. He had moved in from North Dakota three years before and, while busying himself with his own affairs, had proved to be a good neighbor, and an intelligent, progressive citizen. He greeted the Hansons cordially.

"Just a minute, folks, till I get my hat," he ventured after the first call of greeting.

"We rode over, Tremont, this early, to find out if you had seen any tracks of wolves or any signs that they were about. They raided our hog pen last night, and took one little shoat."

"No, Mr. Hanson, can't say as I have seen anything that might make me suspicious of wolves. Sorry you lost your shoat. I ain't had enough experience with wolves, or even coyotes, to make me any authority on them. Unless a big wolf or a bear held me up on the trail, I might never think of them in our neighborhood. Just the same, all this is mighty interesting to me and I'd like to hear more about it."

"Well, come with us, Tremont, we're going over to Boyd's to get some more information. Mebbe you will be able to pick up some ideas about these pests."

As the men rode on over to Boyd's, Hanson expounded his theories regarding the presence of the wolves in the neighborhood.

"Generally speaking, I'm not much worried about wolves in this district. We never pay much tribute to them. They pick off an odd calf, and sometimes two or three of the farmers' dogs. Then we know that the males are doing the providing. If there's evidence that they are staying long enough to tax our hospitality, there is only one thing to do, and that is, do nothing. They won't tarry long. No one ever heard tell of wolves with us for any length of time. Then the C.P.R. tracks are a protection. Did you ever see a young wolf or a coyote cross the steel rails? It is a half hour's job any time. The right-of-way would never be crossed if there was any other method of keeping a general direction.

"I didn't hear the row last night, at the pig pen," he continued, "but the boys told this morning that there was at least one dog or a young wolf—from the tracks it might be either—in the rumpus. Now, if

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it was a dog, there is a she wolf running; and if she is alone, then her mate has been caught or poisoned in the Cypress Hills. I heard last week, possibly read it in the weekly paper, that the ranchers local to the Hills had started to drive the wolves out and with some success.

"There are two ways to do this, both effectual if persisted in. In a district like the Cypress Hills where the outcropping of rock is completely surrounded by open ranges, either method should be good."

"Hello, Boyd!"

The riders had reached the home of the farmer whose land lay beside the right-of-way, and whose dog had been the companion and lover of Rada on her raid of the night before. The whole place—acreage, house, barns, stables, pens, yards, and corrals—indicated thrift and intelligent effort. Boyd was a farmer whose education ran along practical lines. He was extending his operations, increasing his acreage, and growing rich in the interval. His herd was confined to dairy cattle and his calves of both sexes were carefully guarded, because always highly valuable.

"Hello, Mr. Hanson; morning, Trubert and Tre-

mont. Traveling early. Just a minute till I open the gate. There. Ride in and climb off. Glad to see you."

"Glad to be here, Boyd. How is it," asked Hanson, "having a good season?"

"Can't complain, Mr. Hanson," answered Boyd. "Need a little rain now, though. Cows are falling down in their milk some. A two-day's rain would put us back to full production. How is it over to the Hanson Ranch? Good percentage of calves?"

"Rather good, Boyd." The old rancher hesitated for a moment and glanced about him. His son had taken the lines from his hand and was tying the horses to the post and rail near the corral. As the lad and Tremont joined Boyd and Hanson the old man began the discussion of his mission.

"Boyd, can we see your dog?"

"Sure, Hanson, why?" He whistled shrilly. From under the house, the wounded soldier came limping. Boyd drew him to his side, and stooped to pat the sore ears.

"He was in a bad fight somewhere last night," explained Boyd. "Came home about twelve o'clock, whining and crying. Scratched at the door to be let in, and seemed frightened to a shaking fever. Why

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do you ask about the dog, Mr. Hanson?" he continued.

"For this reason, Boyd. There are wolves about," answered the rancher. "Your dog was worried by our collies. No doubt of that. Our hog pen was raided about ten o'clock, one little shoat was taken, and the left ear of the sow was about torn off. The tracks in the pen indicated a full-grown wolf—not a coyote—a timber wolf. While the beast was in the pen fighting the sow, your dog was being worried by our collies. When he was crying his loudest from fear and pain, the wolf leaped the fence and nearly tore the ear off one collie, and likely frightened them both back to the house where they have been content to stay ever since."

"But what makes you think it was Boyd's dog?" asked Tremont.

"There are two good reasons. This dog has been the unfortunate victim of circumstances. First of all, I am convinced that it was a female wolf did the killing and, unless I am mistaken, she will do more. Certainly she will if we start in now to fight her. Most likely her mate has been killed or trapped in the Cypress Hills, and she is running alone. She was lone-

some and this dog looked good to her. She may have an early mating season. Then your dog, Boyd, is a lonesome chap, too. Dogs like company the same as men folks. About every dog for miles through this district is on fighting terms with all the other dogs. Most farmers forget that isolation is often as bad as imprisonment.

"Now we suppose a case. A female wolf is closely related in every way to a female dog. She will fall in love with the male dogs as quickly as she will with a dog wolf. She actually prefers to mate with them. That has been my observation. What happened here night before last? Lady wolf, traveling alone, approached this place, possibly scenting the presence of a dog. She got to windward of him and within a few minutes he got her scent, and he proves as gallant a lover as one would imagine, soon as he discovers she is alone. She had a perfect way of convincing him of this, and also of her own peaceful intentions. They decide to be friends. He is ready to do anything, brave anything, be anything for the possession of her love and her body.

"Of course, being a wolf, she would hide away for the day, and in some spot he could not guess. She

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could not afford to take chances of his impulsive visits or demonstrations. When night came again she called him out, and together they journeyed."

"What frightened him so badly, Mr. Hanson?" asked Boyd. "When I let him in last night, he trembled all over. He was not so sore, except the chewed leg, but his distress seemed to be wholly mental."

Hanson called the dog to him, and then retaining a hold on his collar, sat down on a rock, and began to examine him for marks and wounds.

"I could hardly say, Mr. Boyd. There are theories regarding the treatment of dogs by wolves, but no mere man can successfully gauge the mentality of a female wolf. They have forgotten more of diabolic cunning than we men can ever know. Making a running guess, I would say that if there had been no alarm over at our hog pen, your dog would have come home a happy, satisfied lover. That squeal the little shoat cut loose made a lot of difference to all the actors in the little drama.

"Let me advise you to keep your dog inside the house at night as long as he wants to stay. He'll know when the danger is over. Eventually, get him a young female for company. If she is well bred, he will teach

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her soon all he knows, and it will make him more contented. But one thing be sure of. Don't ever let them hunt together.

"I would advise both you two men, Tremont and Boyd, to do nothing that would indicate your intention to fight the wolves. My contribution to their presence means nothing, and it would be better for me to lose all the young pigs now, rather than set out to fight a female wolf. She can't be trapped, if she is an old wolf, but she can be maddened into a herd raid that might cost us all far too much. Watch your dogs in the daytime, and protect them at night. The wolves are passing through."

7

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THE road gang, riding home that night, noticed the fresh mound of gravel beside the big rock over by the fence near mile post 1089, which was close to Joe Boyd's pasture gate.

"There's one busy badger dug a new home since last night. Must have been in a hurry."

It was John Gray's job as road-master to look after badger holes and all else within the right-of-way. Since the road-bed was double tracked, and the traffic had become extra heavy, the badgers had deserted his territory almost entirely. He had not had much chance to see the extent of the digging, for the car had been running fairly fast, and he had only a glance at the new dirt. In the morning on his way back to work he would have a look at the hole. If the digging was going to interfere with the young trees he had set out over this section, Mr. Badger would have to get other quarters. That

night at supper he discussed the find with his boys.

"There's a new badger hole out at mile post 1089 by the side of the fence, and you lads are almost sure to have a badger before the week is out. Tomorrow, as we go east, we'll look it over, and if there is a chance of our digging the old fellow out, the badger is yours."

Just before sundown, Joe Boyd and his wife, in whom the discussions of Hanson about the wolf and their dog had created a great interest, took a walk down to the right-of-way to watch the great Transcontinental Express run by on its way east. This was the one break they had in the monotony of their lives. It gave them a decided thrill. They could look for ten miles to the west, across the Alkali Flats, and watch the headlight grow from the size and glow of an incandescent globe to the candle power of a sun in its penetrating, dazzling, overwhelming brilliance. With it would come the great locomotives and the beautiful illuminations of the hurtling coaches with the library and observation car and the loaded platform behind. Always some one would wave to them in response to their simple demonstrations of good will. The

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passing train meant much to them. It came from the unknown and mysterious West, and was rushing back to the civilization they knew and had sprung from. It gave them something to talk about, much to speculate upon.

They reached the fence before the glow of the headlight had appeared below Maple Creek. That meant twenty minutes to wait. Suppose they went across the tracks and sat down on the bank.

"Where is Tip, Joe? Whistle for him," suggested Mrs. Boyd.

Joe whistled, and the dog crawled out from under the house, shook himself, and then leisurely followed them to the pasture gate. As they crossed the lot toward the railway, Tip lagged behind to gather a lot of speculative news from the breeze.

He found traces of an old blood letting close at hand: dead and dried blood and wolf smells. These he followed closely till he came to some tufts of hair and hide still adhering to the barbs of the fence wire. These interested him materially and his spirited examination attracted Boyd's attention also.

"Look here, Margaret. A wolf or coyote has been

hung up on the wire here. Been wounded rather badly before he got away. See the blood traces on the ground? I wonder if it was a clean getaway, or if he is lingering near by."

"Don't look for him, Joe. Leave the poor animal alone. If he is badly torn, he has likely crawled away to die."

"But, Margaret, a wounded wolf would surely have a mate, and it must have been this mate that took Tip on the raid to Hanson's."

In the moment of Joe's explanation, Tip, hurrying around, had caught the scent of his sweetheart. One thing certain in Tip's mentality was that he wanted nothing further in common with a wolf, so he made for the house, whining and mourning as he ran. He had made a poor getaway, however. In the excitement of his investigations, he made the foolish blunder of registering on a near-by post. That, later, established in the minds of both Rada and Bentick the fact that the dog had been investigating, and a scrutiny of the hiding place of Lemus was the one unethical misdemeanor to be punished if necessary and possible. Events, however, proved

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that in the presence of a bigger situation, thought of retaliation should be abandoned.

Joe had crawled between the wires and, already attracted by the mound of newly-dug earth, was carefully investigating the den where lay the wounded wolf. The night had closed in too dark for him to distinguish anything within the burrow, although to his dull, unpracticed sense of smell there came the musty message of a denned-up wild animal.

"This is the wolf den, Margaret, and the chap that was hurt on the barbs is in there." Joe's nose had told him a truth for once.

"Well, Joe, come right away from there. If the poor brute is lying there all wounded and torn, why disturb him? I am going in as soon as the Limited runs by, and bring him down some scraps to eat."

"Never mind the scraps, Margaret. Keep quiet till the train goes by, and then I'll bring him something to drink. His mate will keep him supplied with food."

The great light of the locomotive was on the pair of young people, standing there in the deepening

dusk of a September night. The roar of the express was deepening, a couple of miles yet to run before the panorama of power, force, and mystery would sweep by them. The light was searching out the grass and penetrating all the gloom in its sweep. Joe stooped down to look into the wolf den as the rays of the flash broke in from the other side under the rock. He saw a great wolf resting on his forearms with his body prone. He was alert, startled, but impressed with the sense of his latent power. Joe had never seen a wolf before. For two full minutes he had the chance to study this specimen. He could only guess at the extent of its wounds. A second more and the angle of light was shifted, leaving the den in darkness.

Joe joined Margaret as the train roared by, and together they waved. The searchlight from the rear-end platform singled them out and flashed a greeting.

“I saw the big wolf, Margaret!”

“When, Joe?”

“When the headlight was throwing against the west side of the rock. When I was stooped down, and waved to you. The light seeped under the rock

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where the den had been dug through to give some air on the far side."

"Is he a big fellow, Joe?"

"Well, Margaret, I hardly know how big wolves are expected to be, but this is a mighty big chap, a dark gray coat with a lighter shaded belly. He has been badly torn on the barbs, but has been kept clean. If we can give him something to drink, the poor chap will make a recovery true enough."

Up at the house Margaret resurrected a flat milk-pan that had been battered beyond its natural beauty, and Joe carried it down to the mouth of the den, where he filled it with water from his pail.

The next morning when he went to investigate, he discovered the empty pan, with strange indentations on the side that looked like teeth marks, and which seemed to correspond with the canines of a dog or a wolf.

Both Rada and Bentick had watched the visit of Joe and Margaret to the fence, and the den. They had brought with them Lemus' meal. Rabbits, as a regular diet, are not altogether to the liking of the killers but instinct had warned both female wolves that a raid, now, on a herd was not a good

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policy. They felt that somehow they were on suffrage in the district.

Rada circuited Joe and Margaret as they returned to the house, keenly investigating to learn, if she could, their attitude. Every movement on their part was noted and mentally adapted to the conditions Lemus was forced into by virtue of the discovery of his hiding place. She dropped on her belly and watched closely the activity of both Joe and Margaret as they hunted a basin for water.

Margaret would have been badly frightened, as she busied herself with her little task of preparing and scouring the basin, if she had known that just back there in the darkness not three jumps away a great she wolf was intently watching her every move.

When she called to Tip, urging him to come out from under the house, and he responded by whining and moaning in suppressed fear, she little dreamed of the source of his hysteria.

Rada was nothing but curious. Somehow she seemed to glean that only kindness was in the hearts of this male and female of the man species. Gen-

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erally speaking, and under ordinary circumstances she would pay no heed to them, except possibly to be suspicious of their movements. Now, however, circumstances had thrust her into a close relationship that had to be adjusted to be survived.

As Joe started back to the den with his pan and pail of water, Rada followed along, ever out of sight and yet ever close at hand for the protection of her mate. She still believed in the pacific attitude of the man, but she was not allowing herself to be swayed by over-confidence.

In discussing the nature and instincts of the wolf, many writers have, for the purposes of dramatic interest, attributed a disposition to the wolves entirely out of keeping with the real facts. It is impossible to believe that, alone, Rada would have attacked Joe under any circumstances. Her protection of her mate would mean that it was her intention that no harm should come to him from any source. She would not have to attack the man. She could threaten sufficiently to warn him of the danger of his enterprise.

But Joe was evidently intending to be kind, and

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so Rada hurried to cross the fence and the railroad tracks, in order to warn Bentick of the situation.

The farmer slid between the wires of the fence, reached back for his water-pail and pan, and then fearlessly approached the den. He brushed, with the side of his shoe, a space clear of stones sufficiently large to accommodate the pan, which he filled with water.

"Now, old timer, if you can get out to this, you will feel better." It was a kindly suggestion, easily and naturally offered.

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BENTICK and Rada, from across the tracks, watched Joe as he proceeded home, and when they had seen the door close on him, they crossed over to the rock.

The investigation of the basin of water was very thorough. All the odors were dissected and discussed. Rada did not quite understand the precautions that Bentick took. She crawled in beside Lemus, and examined his wounds. She layed about his head and shoulders and licked his face and chops in pure satisfaction. He was well and doing well. The realization of this gave her unbounded satisfaction, but he needed more room in which to turn around so that he could get out easier. It would be necessary for her to back out, and somehow he would have to pull himself so that he could get the drink from the basin Bentick was working over.

After Rada had backed out of the den, which

was a greater task than she had counted on, there was sufficient room for Lemus to turn. Carefully he started, and patiently he worked. Just out there was water. He needed it so badly. Bentick had carefully dragged the basin with her teeth close to the opening of the den, and to satisfy both Rada and Lemus that drinking the water was safe, she set aside her compunctions and scruples and lapped up a substantial share of it.

Lemus was coming. His gray wolfish eyes were set in the stare of a determination. His tongue and chops were dry and fevered. He was dragging his sore body and stiffened limbs, and while the pain and danger of opening the wounds were great, yet he had to reach that drink.

It was good, that fresh, cold water. The females lay down fronting him and watched him satisfy himself.

The using of the basin, an ordinary tin one, was far removed from the ordinary caution of the wolves. Trappers and hunters know full well that if they would save their kill from the wolves or hold it intact till such time as they could more satisfactorily dispose of it, about all that is necessary is to

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place a knife, a steel ramrod, or even a belt buckle on the carcass. Few wolves will touch a kill that has such an article on or near it.

Western trappers, however, affirm that in the days of the buffalo the poisoning of wolves was common, and it is known to be a fact that until twenty years ago wolves and coyotes were fought successfully with poison. After a period, they began to understand that a kill conveniently located might be dangerous to the health of any passing wolf. This fear was lodged in their mentality until it became part of their nature, and was bred into their children, until in recent times wolves have been far too wise to be disturbed by a poison bait.

To be poisoned or harmed by a pan of water would involve Bentick in a new line of reasoning, for it is not only with the natural cunning of the wolf we have to deal. We must attribute to them ability to reason, as well as keen perceptive powers. Any one familiar with their habits, who has attempted to meet them and outwit them, will admit this fact, and possibly add to it from the pages of his experience.

Bentick and Rada had noted the presence of the

male and female of the man species at the improvised den of Lemus. They were not sure that no harm had been participated in or had been intended; but their perceptive faculties licensed them to believe that all was well. They saw the two humans go quietly away, and in a short time the man returned with the one blessing most needed and desired by Lemus. It seemed essential to his life. The basin? Such a thing as this was, possibly, as well or better known to Bentick than any other creation of man she had met with or examined in fear or curiosity. She had never attempted the raiding of a rancher's hencoop without meeting up with a basin of some sort set handy for the chickens. The basin would not frighten her. The presence of the man and his mate only determined both of the females on the immediate removal of Lemus to safer quarters. Men, like wolves, had a means of communication; and word of the presence of Lemus, if spread abroad, would mean danger not only to him, but to themselves as well. Man just could not be trusted. He was a natural enemy, and as such could be allowed no latitude.

Rada and Bentick lay down on the grass between

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the fence and the big rock and, facing the evening breeze, gathered in the news. There were Indians moving again, and some wolves. The man scent was rather strong. There was no fresh kill on any range to the west and north, but the usual number of coyotes were about. It might be a good night to go over to the pig-pen at Hanson's and pick up a choice supper. At least, a little flirtation with the collies was possible unless they were too frightened. It was worth trying.

They had reached the coulee below Hanson's, where Rada had feasted off the porker, when both wolves stopped in their tracks. While there was nothing in sight to disturb or alarm, the man smell was very strong from the ground, and still lingered in the air. The wolves separated and both ran about twenty yards in opposite directions, then stopped and used their noses as guides. There had been no men there. The scent was localized. Men had been at work on the ground where the scent first checked them. Rada stood still while Bentick went forward with her examination. Very carefully she moved. She tried to smell out the reason for the presence of man about the centralized location.

Again she ran to one side, out of the scent, and then circled all around, returning to the spot where Rada lay waiting.

Then both wolves worked closer in till at last the smell of a little porker, recently killed and laid carefully on the ground, was discovered. Rada made as if to get to it, but Bentick jumped in front of her to hold her back. Rada was content then to work more slowly with the older wolf, narrowing the circle of their efforts. They scratched over every foot of the ground carefully, testing from time to time to detect some strange foreign smell.

At last, Bentick found the serrated jaws of the wolf-trap. Gently she uncovered the jaws all around, leaving them exposed, for Rada to study. Searching about, she got three rocks, sufficiently round to admit of their rolling freely. Patiently she worked with them till she had them where, by turning her rump to the latch of the trap, she could roll them across the blade, thus springing the trap. Three or four times she rolled them, but each try was hardly direct enough. Rada got impatient and, not realizing the danger, endeavored to assist in the rolling. Bentick checked her in this. Eventually she

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accompanied her protest with a growl that meant more to Rada than a mere whining protest.

At last, after Bentick had many tries in the gentle art of springing traps, she succeeded in running a rock directly to the porker on the blade of the latch, and with a crash the trap jaws sprang into place.

Rada now understood. This was what had caught the wolf down on the prairie at the Cypress Hills. Had she been alone, had Bentick not checked her, held her, and showed her the danger, and a way out of it, she might have stumbled into the cruel jaws.

Bentick picked out the little dead porker from the now harmless trap, carried it to Rada, and together they feasted on it.

Hanson could not have set the trap. It was too crudely done. More than likely one of the boys had tried his hand at trapping wolves, with a result that was bound to be disappointing to him.

After supper on the little pig, the wolves crossed the narrow strip of sand hills that formed the eastern boundary of the big pasture, ran through a bunch of dogies that were being herded prior to

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shipping to the Matador Ranch for finishing and, at the farthest corner, caught and killed a nice yearling calf that they singled out for the feast. They dragged the carcass outside the wire fence and registered close at hand, so that the coyotes might understand the risk they were running in disturbing the kill.

They had faced the west again and were quietly jogging along, when, clear and bold came the mating howl of a male wolf from the direction in which Lemus was lying wounded and sore. To Rada the call was an inspiration. Bentick had never heard it before, but Rada immediately thought that the wounded wolf might have dragged himself out of his den and was howling out his testimony of healing, much in defiance, and much in thanksgiving.

The lope became a gallop, and the gallop a run, as again the call went up and was recognized as from the mate of Rada.

Lemus was standing, not too gracefully, but on his feet, erect, waiting for his mates. His call had set going some voices in reply, that, while not so dignified, were at least as defiant. The coyotes had

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bunched for defense, and now their cackling laugh and staccato notes of alarm in reply made the night hideous for all within range.

When Rada and Bentick drew up to him, Lemus paid but little heed at first to his own mate, but concentrated on Bentick. In all respects save that she was a she wolf running with Rada for company and protection, she gave no heed and wasted no pleasantries on Lemus. When she could help him she was all attention. When he felt able to help himself, she too was able to protect herself. There was no cause for jealousy on Rada's part.

With Bentick leading slowly and carefully, Lemus and Rada crossed the steel of the railway and walked alongside the wire fence to the depression where the latter was in the habit of crawling under.

In the big pasture, Lemus started bravely into a trot but was forced to give it up. His walk, however, was working out the natural stiffness in his muscles from lying so long in the one position. The edge of the big herd was soon reached. The cattle were down and contentedly chewing their cuds. It would be better to keep away from them now, for

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if they were roused into a panic, some bull from within the herd would be sure to dispute their passage and might do Lemus an unnecessary harm.

They loped slowly, stopping often to save Lemus, to the kill they had made a couple of hours previously, and feasted to their fill. They were gluttonous in their eating, but knew their needs. They were forty miles from the Crane Lake brush, through open country where day running by timber wolves is never safe. They had a hundred miles to go to reach the bottoms of the South Saskatchewan River, and Lemus would be a slow traveler, although he would improve as he journeyed.

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RADA GOES ON HER OWN

IT was a long, tiresome run from the Hanson Ranch on the right-of-way to the Matador Ranch on the Saskatchewan River, necessitating ten days of bedding down in the prairie grass, sometimes in the blazing sun, but much of the time in the rains of the early fall; and ten nights of feeding and running, always heading instinctively to the northeast, to a country the younger wolves had never known, and of which the older wolf, Bentick, had never dreamed. But the three adventurers were on their way. Lemus had so far recovered that the long, hard gallops with the ground-covering strides were possible again.

Before the snows came, the big wolf would be primed and fit to contend with any hobo for the kingship of his pack—any pack. He was developing into a wonderful specimen and was entirely conscious of his crusading powers. From the acci-

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dent of the barbed wire came one result that he, being a beast, could not quite understand. His sexual inspiration was missing to a greater degree than at first seemed possible from the nature of the wound. His ambitions now were more for prestige and leadership than for love with its entangling results. His regard for Rada was purely a love for a companion, his mating an impersonal thought. The sexual losses brought a compensation in the growth of strength and physique. He was to reach a growth forty pounds heavier than a wolf of his age generally attains. He was to stand seven inches taller at the withers, and nine inches longer from his nose to the root of his tail, than any other wolf on the Saskatchewan. He had never yet had a chance to test his strength either in struggle with a victim or in battle, but before he and his companions had cleared the Matador Ranch he was to have the opportunity to test his battling prowess.

The experimental horse ranch of Andrew Duthie is about forty miles north of the right-of-way in the Crane Lake district. Duthie generally runs about four hundred head of breeding Indian cayuses or ponies. These he crosses with Irish

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hunter stallions. The result is a type of polo pony that can hardly be improved upon. They are markedly intelligent, active, sure footed, and as game as a football player or a hockey expert. They can rough it in a mix-up or dart like a bullet to follow the ball. The big pasture corners into Crane Lake, and the outside fences of the ranch enclose about eighty square miles of rolling prairie.

The breeding season during the year of my story had been good. The returns in colts was most satisfactory, both in numbers and quality. Duthie usually observed the essential precautions to protect his herd from the wolves, but, like many other ranchers who had adopted the insurance methods against loss, he eased up on protection and let the insurance companies meet all deficiencies. The process of natural communal protection adopted by the ponies, however, was of considerable virtue in itself.

The three wolves reached the six-wire fence of the Duthie Ranch one morning an hour before dawn. They needed breakfast, for the run had been hard and, in the heavy grasses, very tiring.

Lemus, drawing on his fund of experience, lay

down outside the fence. Rada and Bentick, however, found a spot where the wires bridged a small ditch, and got into the pasture. They were not long within the enclosure before they discovered that the ponies and colts, the scent of which had guided them, were herded in the coulees. There were one or two barren mares acting as sentries on the bench-land, and with the first sight and smell of wolves these gave the alarming neigh or scream that roused the sleeping herd below. In an instant the mares and colts were up, and then began the detail of the plan of protection. The colts were herded into as compact a group as possible, and all about them stood the mares facing to the inside and presenting a battery of hoofs ready to lash out on the close approach of their enemies.

Rada and Bentick, mountain born and bred wolves, making their first visit to the prairie, were meeting up with a new form of battle. They trotted around the bunch, and, as they experimented in a closer contact, both narrowly escaped the punishing blows from the hoofs of the mares.

Lemus, tired and hungry lying in the grass outside the fence, waited impatiently for the meal he

had a right to expect would be provided for him. After half an hour he decided that his providers had disappeared, or had made a kill, and were feasting themselves, disregarding his needs. He hunted up the ditch where the females had crawled under the wire, and let himself through; then he caught up their trail and followed quickly over to the edge of the coulee. With a glance, he absorbed the situation. This was something for him to straighten out —a situation in practical economics, requiring the brain and courage of a killer of his dimensions. He would attend to it right away. Quickly he ran down into the coulee. His companions met him cheerfully enough, but he brushed them aside with disdain. Why had they not made their kill? The choicest meals were right before them. All they had to do was make a selection, and then drag it out. Start a stampede and then kill as was needed. This was easy. He would show them how to kill, and after this needful lesson they could always do the providing.

Bentick and Rada stood aside to allow the lord and master the full privileges of the demonstration. Lemus trotted around the bunch of mares, noting

his chances for taking out one of the colts. He made a selection, at last, and rushed in to seize it. He was met by the hoofs of a chunky, powerful little mare, which cracked him square on the side of the head and knocked him ten feet back, dazed and defeated. He lay as he had fallen. If the mare had been lucky enough to have hit him four inches farther to the front she would have broken his jaws, as she cracked his skull.

The dawn had broken, and in the east the sun was sending aloft its heralds of glory. The time had gone by for a herd raid now.

Rada and Bentick walked over to the prostrate Lemus and tried to rouse him. His lung power was still functioning and his nervous system was beginning to react to the shock he had received. It was well that he was guarded by his companions. A bunch of mares have been known to stamp and trample out the lives of wolves who have been knocked senseless by the hoofs of their defenders.

Lemus roused himself at last, struggled to his feet and, without taking a look at the massed battery he had blundered into, started for the hole

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under the fence as the most convenient exit of safety.

Rada and Bentick did not follow him. They ran quickly to some willow bluffs outside the fence, farther north. They would have to breakfast on rabbits after all.

If wolves have a sense of humor, the two associates of the big ridgling must have had one long laugh.

The Matador Ranching Company was one of those American groups that believed as emphatically in preparedness and efficiency on the prairie, as they did in the other phases of their activities. They made as much preparation for the protection of their herds from wolves, coyotes, and other marauders, as they did for the marketing and shipping of their fattened and finished cattle. In the arsenal case in the superintendent's office there were rifles that could kill as far as the eyes of man could sight; in the storehouse there were bear, wolf, and coyote traps, oiled and always ready for use; and in the kennels beyond the cook house there were enough Russian wolf hounds, real killers, to

clear the prairies belonging to the Matador Company and a few added townships. The poor misguided coyote who ventured on Matador territory never left it alive, if by any means the hounds discovered him. They were faster than a wolf and quite as strong, but in a battle they had a weakness that all the wolf-killers possess. Their leg bones were too small and too brittle. As long as they could hold their victims off and worry them at a distance, they were safe; but in the close-up struggle a wise battler could easily disable them.

There was one feature, however, about the Russian hounds that placed them at a disadvantage. The dog smell was most pronounced. It carried terror with it to the people of the prairie, just as did the smell of the wolf. Of course, no one save animals could determine if there was a similarity between the odor of the wolf and the hounds, but there was one attribute in common—its fear-producing effect. Unless there was specific work for the hounds, they were chained continually. When they were running free they were always accompanied by one or two of the men. If word came in by any of the riders that a wolf or a coyote had

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been seen, the dogs hurried out. When they returned there was one less killer roaming free on the range.

Lemus and Rada, in following the trail their instinct mapped out for them to reach the big timber, had made one mistake. If they had not been so exclusive in the Cypress Hills, they would, somehow, from some source have learned, by the wolf form of communication, to avoid the Matador Range. The trail led them over much unfenced land, and crossing the Range gave them about forty more miles of the sort of going to which they were partial. Lemus had decided that his one experience with barbed wire was enough for a lifetime. In the very early morning they reached the south bank of the Saskatchewan, about ten miles west of the Matador, dropped down into the river bottom, which was rather heavily timbered, and Rada hopped into a calf pasture and stole a nice Hereford bull calf for breakfast. Before making their meal, however, both Bentick and Lemus carefully circuited through the timber, their noses in the air to get all the signals, all the news.

There was a dog in the yard of the nearest farm-

house; plenty of man smells, and an emphatic smell farther east; might be wolf, or might be dog. Whatever it was, it had an irritating effect on Lemus. His hair roached from his ears back to his tail. It was more than mere annoyance. It was anger, defiance, wolfish rage—the killer instinct. He dug his claws into the soft gravel and made the pebbles rattle behind him. The farmer's dog had caught the smell of the intruders and proceeded with his alarm, until Bentick stole close enough to rush him, when he ran yipping into his kennel to hush and stay hushed.

Rada had finished her breakfast when Bentick and Lemus returned, and the two wolves, avoiding her friendly advances, proceeded with their meal. Before they had finished, Rada hunted up a comfortable spot in an underbrush thicket and proceeded to sleep out the day.

Bentick and Lemus, however, decided to do some further investigating. They climbed back to the prairie level and, seeking a hill, sneaked around its base to a wooded side, where they climbed through to the top, and from that elevation tried to discover the cause of their submerged excitement. They

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were fearful, not of man smells nor of what they had learned of the dog smells. Dogs could hardly employ the minds of wolves for long, but this was something different, intangible in its threat, mysterious in its menace.

The terrain below them for miles was deeply indented with coulees where the surface water running down into the river bottom had channelled a passage. Some of these passages had sodded with age, some were freshly cut with soil and rock bared sides, and all had a direct run from far back on the plain to the bottom of the river level. These coulees, especially the older ones, were almost impassable with thicket of Saskatoon scrub, and made excellent cover for all sorts of wild game. There was an abundance of brush rabbit; woodgrouse, partridge, and prairie chickens were plentiful; and there were many evidences of the presence of badgers and gophers. There were, however, no coyotes within range of either the eyes or the noses of the observers. This seemed strange in a territory where the gophers were so plentiful, so prosperous-looking and so bold.

Across the valley, and possibly ten miles from

where the wolves lay, the Matador Ranch buildings, corrals, and stables were located. This rather perfectly arranged establishment was centered on a bench that was gradually approached by a winding road from the river ferry. By sun-up it would be the center of considerable activity.

The morning breeze brought from the ranch all the smells indicated there, and it was from this direction the strange, unguessed scents came, the very mystery of which was so profoundly impressive and irritating. However, there was nothing to be done about it just now. The day had broken, and in the east the glory of the coming sun was developing in a silver radiance.

Bentick withdrew from the hill, and stealthily slipped down the nearest coulee where the dense thicket gave her shelter and protection. Here she was soon joined by Lemus, and together they dropped off to sleep.

So far as Rada was concerned, she was quite indifferent to all the safety surveys being made by Bentick and Lemus. Since the advent of the female wolf into the lives of Lemus and herself, she had abandoned her sense of responsibility entirely. The

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superior tact, wisdom, and caution of the older wolf impressed her; but at the same time it deprived her of the self-confidence she should have had, and which her experiences and acquired knowledge should have solidified.

She was leaving too much to Bentick. Within her own mentality she guessed some of the reason for this attitude she was adopting. Lemus was changing. He was no longer the appealing, dominating control in her life. He had been cruel in his wolfish demands and desires. More than once she had to fight, to hurt and be hurt, that she might preserve her natural inclinations; but even this was better than the supreme indifference he continually manifested now. Then she had remembered her dog friend back on the right-of-way. She planned to creep away from her companions, fired with the determination to leave them and return; soon she would have again the passion days, and the fever of desire. She had an instinctive knowledge that mating with a dog would bring disaster upon both of them. The dog might be welcomed back to the life he had temporarily abandoned; but she, the outlaw, would perish. But, the dog, the sire of her

pups, in his unmeasured loves and entire lack of caution, would surely betray her whereabouts. She would lose her pups, and most likely be tortured and destroyed herself. There was every argument that a reasoning mind could conjure against her mating out of her own type and kind, but the whole problem was a strange one.

Lemus had changed in his attitude towards Rada. To his credit, however, it must be added that he was not diverting his love or his attentions or his intentions from his mate to Bentick. Before the full effects of his accident had robbed him of his desires, he had undertaken to make love to the older wolf; but on such occasions had been repulsed so emphatically as to warrant a saner line of conduct. Week by week he realized his growth, and with every groping after the intangible mystery of his sexual losses, came, not the disappointments suggested, but the greater satisfaction of a knowledge that in size and strength he would soon be invincible.

His relationship with Rada had changed undoubtedly, but only the unreasoning attitude of a

female mentality, that followed up a knowledge until it became a complaint, induced the change. Lemus was kinder, more considerate than he had ever been; he gave greater heed than he had before manifested to her whims, fancies, hysterical moods, and incautious acts. It was Rada who had changed, and both of them knew it. Bentick realized and understood, and it maddened her. Some day she would see to it that Rada understood better her position as a mate and spouse.

Bentick, to Lemus, was so capable, so helpful, and so companionable that the respect he had been taught by her to show, developed into an understanding that was akin to love. She had guessed his condition, long before he realized it himself; and, as his developing strength and physique offered the compensations for the losses his tortures had entailed, she seemed to understand and appreciate.

It was the daytime prowling of Rada that was so irritating to both Lemus and Bentick. The unnecessary risks entered and the barren results produced made the danger of the discovery of their presence in a community extremely risky. No wolf

can saunter into the open near a herd of cattle or close to a farmer's or rancher's home without causing a sensational stampede.

The short-sighted cattle may rush to find out the true identity; but, once they learn it, they will bellow and run so that the alarm is broadcast immediately, and nearly always before the author of the mischief has hidden herself.

Rada was always taking these risks, and more than once the results had been unfair to Lemus and Bentick. On one occasion, on the Crane Lake Range, when the wolves were sleeping out a day in some timber near a pasture, Rada had roused herself in the early afternoon and, with the mood to ramble upon her, had examined the country lying all about the tiny speck of brush in which they were hidden. They were only a small distance from a main-traveled trail, and but a short way from a building about which some small humans continually played. Possibly because she was curious, but more likely for the reason that it gave her a certain satisfaction to frighten humans, she walked out into the open, crossed to the road, and then deliberately trotted down towards the school she had discov-

ered. There could be but one result to her visit. The children fled in dismay inside, and, behind a bolted door they remained with their teacher, frightened and helpless.

Rada lay down a few yards away to wait for further developments. When nothing startling or interesting was in evidence, the wolf retreated to the road and back to the spot of brush.

Both Lemus and Bentick were awake and had been watching the adventure. The line of wolf profanity that must have greeted Rada checked her peregrinations for a season, but it was the immediate result of this escapade that impressed her with its danger.

Hardly had the wolf disappeared, before the children were scattering for home down the road. None of them dared pass up the trail that crossed in front of the thicket of brush. Before an hour had passed there were man and horse smells from three quarters. So emphatic did the approach of the scent indicate the presence of humans that the wolves were bound to realize their great danger. There were two ways out of the predicament. The first was to lie quietly in the brush with the idea of

sneaking away at nightfall; and the other was to make a rush for the open, and accept all chances in the hope of gaining the barbed-wire fences before the men mounted on horses could run them down. There was not much time in which to make a decision. From somewhere behind and beyond the building a rifle cracked, and through the brush above the heads of the wolves a bullet sang its siren of warning. The wolves knew what it all meant. Lemus and Bentick crept on their bellies to the side of the brush on the far side of the building, and investigated as carefully as they dared without exposing themselves for traces of an enemy in that direction.

The wolf hunters, from behind the building, kept up their tattoo of shots into the brush. They had not dared surround it and continue shooting, as bullets might go through and do damage to the hunters on the other side. Just why the marksmen persisted in remaining behind the building, even a wolf could not guess. Somehow the homesteaders could never learn how to protect themselves against wolves. It did not take long for Bentick and Lemus to determine their chances, and so, after a warn-

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ing call to Rada, they trotted into the open and, keeping the bluff of brush between them and the hunters, they loped off to safety.

The incident was unnecessary, however, and was most provoking. Rada tried to work up a show of good nature when they were safe again, but her efforts fell flat. Wolves are night raiders. Being outlaws, all the laws of self-preservation must be observed. The standardized ethics that control all life call for a sensible, conservative estimate of all chances against the fulfillment of a destiny, and this is especially true among the outlaws. Rada was almost continually acting unfairly in this regard, and the growing resentment of the other wolves was most evident.

Rada woke from her long sleep and worked herself out of the shadows of the thicket where she had been lying and sought a place where the hot noon sun would warm her. She noted the absence of Lemus and Bentick, and wondered where they had gone. Not that she cared much, but she had simply an idle desire to know where they were and what they were doing. She roused herself and looked all about. They were not in sight. She might

have guessed that they had hunted up a quiet, safe spot and were day-sleeping—the most natural thing for them to be doing. Just the same, she would look them up.

She dropped down the coulee to the edge of the river bottom and discovered two half-grown wolverine pups, finishing the kill on which the wolves had breakfasted. She knew that the farmer's house was too near at hand for her to risk a squabble with a couple of noisy wolverines; but she persisted in her first idea of rushing them and giving them a scare or a fright. It was a good idea, pregnant with a lot of fun, far from the danger of a discovery; but situated as it was, the outcome was disappointing and dangerous.

Nothing worked out as Rada had figured. The wolverine pups did not scare. They saw her coming and were ready for her rush. She expected them to run for cover; then she would have the fun of chasing them and biting their rumps as they fled in dismay. Instead, she found herself on the defensive from the very first. She bowled one over as she bit him, and was ready to annihilate him with one crushing bite when he stopped rolling—but he did

not stop. He was scrambling as he rolled, and before she could catch him, the other pup had her hind ankle in his teeth and was bearing down so heavily that in her agony she had to turn and fight the pup at her heels. Try as she would she could not shake him loose. The harder she bit and shook, the harder he bit and struggled. Meantime the other pup had discarded his scramble and roll, and had started to fight in earnest. Now it was everybody's battle and a good one to talk about. The pain in her ankle in the grip of the pup from the rear was so intense that Rada's growl of rage was reaching to the soprano of a scream, while to this was added the heavier sputterings of the excited and outraged pups.

In trying to break the hold of the pup on her ankle, she succeeded in tripping herself and the three combatants rolled on the ground together. It would have been a good fight with a quick ending if only the wolverines had known when they were licked, and had not been so active. Before Rada could get a grip on the throat of the pup working behind, to release her ankle, the pup with the roll had fastened his fangs in her ear. His weight made

her labor heavily as she fought, and she was becoming winded. The pups were merely hanging on and worrying at their holds. Again and again Rada attempted to break the grip on her ear, but it was no use. The young wolverine was too heavy to be shaken off. She was lying in an awkward position, and suffering from the activities of the pup at her ankle. When she tried to get up this beast would lift her feet from the ground and pull them from under her. This is the wolverine tactics of battle —to keep the victim on its back or side and let it do the struggling.

Rada was helpless, and was becoming weak. A grip on the ear and a leg hold will not kill a wolf, or even a dog, but it will so subdue and weaken a victim that a rush to a vital part may soon end the battle. The wolverine plays this waiting game with adversaries larger than himself until he tires them out, and then if he can get their abdomens exposed he will rush to tear that vital part open. This horrible punishment is always threatening the losing battler in such a fight. Rada seemed to sense her danger, and kept her belly on the ground. She gave up struggling and stoically took her punish-

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ment—the horrible pain in her ankle, the tug on her ear, and the stress in her throat from the rapid breathing of her struggle. She was no longer the hysterical, screaming, maddened marauder; she was a wolf, with all the courage, cunning, and strength of a killer. This fight had been favoring the wolverines because they had an instinctive method of battle. She had rushed in; and now she would work out; and before she had finished she would kill, as a wolf should kill, by virtue of her cunning and tenacity of purpose.

With the instinctive craft of their kind, the pups began to realize that killing by ripping open of the belly of their victim was in this case an impossibility. Tug and tear as they would, they could do no more than punish. The wolf was too strong to handle from the grips they had on her. They were pulling against each other. Then her nonresistance, her cessation from struggle other than holding herself rigid, was disconcerting. The wolverine at her ankle joint released his grip for an instant to enjoy a feast of blood from a ruptured vein in her leg. The wolf lay like death. A murmur, intelligible to the other pup, from the first one and the grip on

the ear of the wolf relaxed. An instant was long enough. Like a flash, Rada was on her feet and away. The wolverines did not follow far. Admitting themselves outwitted, they growled their defiance and disdain, and set about to repair their own wounds.

Rada shook her head, then lay down to cleanse and disinfect the wound on her ankle.

Fighting a wolverine, young or old, involved a risk no sensible wolf would undertake. The danger of infection was too great. Blood letters and blood drinkers as they were, their mouths and jaws were too prone to carry the germs of tetanus or blood poison. Rada would have to take a chance with the wounds in her ear, but she could care for her own foot.

There was one thing more, however, for her to do. She would have to kill the wolverines. They were neither frightened nor disconcerted by her escape. They had not abandoned the fight. She could easily disappear now and hunt up Lemus and Bentick, who would readily take up her battle. If she did, and either of them was bitten, the danger of death from tetanus or the blood poison would

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threaten her comrades. This battle was her own, of her own suggestion, and she was going to win it, as a wolf should win a battle against any foe.

As Rada moved out in the open again, the pups spied her and came on, raging, in their clumsy fashion. Rada wanted a drink before she went into action again. To gain her end she made a dash up the hill, and, as they attempted to follow her, she side jumped, landing in a sand hill, which broke the noise of her progress back to the little stream near which the fight had been started. Long and deep she drank and then she waded in beyond her depth, and submerged her head in the cool water. She came out dripping and refreshed. Now she was ready for battle. Now she would fight as a wolf fights, using her brains, her savage mastery.

Before she could search out and engage her enemies again, another actor appeared on the scene, or to be quite exact, was in the wings, hurrying fast to take his part in the tragedy. Rada caught the full scent of dog as she headed east again, and in the distance under the trees she caught sight of a great Russian hound running in her direction, taking his lead from the smells of the wolverines whose

scent was bound to carry farther than her own.

With a dash she rushed into a thicket of one of the coulees, and madly she scrambled through, up and up, to gain at last the level of the prairie benchland above. She was on that level before the hound had reached the wolverines below.

10

LEMUS AND BENTICK

RADA heard the clash of battle as the hound rushed the pups. For the space of possibly a moment the struggle continued, then it seemed to take on a fiercer note. If she had made that much noise when the battle was on before, there was no doubt but that Lemus and Bentick had heard it, if they had not left the neighborhood altogether.

Rada wanted badly to have a look at this greater struggle. It sounded as if there were four or five in the fight. Was that Lemus' heavy guttural growl? She would have to see for herself. Swiftly but silently she slipped down the side of the ravine until she stood within the timber twenty feet away from the fighters.

Lemus and the hound were at grips in a struggle to death, the hound with his teeth in the shoulder of Lemus, and the wolf tearing at the sides and abdomen of the hound. Bentick had been engaged

with the wolverine pups, and in a scientific fashion had killed one and was in the process of beating the other to death by a grip through its back above the kidneys, which made it possible for her to slam its head and forequarters heavily on the ground.

As Rada came into the struggle, Bentick released her hold on the pup and tossed it away, where it lay prone with a broken back and battered head. Without hesitating, Bentick rushed for the hound. The battlers were on their feet, the hound standing more upright. As Lemus struggled to break the hold of the hound the latter was forced upright completely, leaving his loins and sexual organs wholly exposed. With a snarl of rage, Bentick secured her hold and tore like a demon. An instant and the big artery that runs so close to the surface at this point was severed. Again Bentick tore and ripped at the abdominal angle. A whine of despair escaped from the hound as he released his hold and dropped over on his side, broken, torn, and dying.

The wolves had won this first big battle. Lemus might have beaten the hound alone. He had the strength and courage, the stamina and the will, but he was short on technique. The chances are that he

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might have been badly torn and broken, had the fight gone on with but the two combatants engaged.

Lemus and Bentick did not wait for Rada, whose curiosity had led her to examine the body of the hound. They hurried up the ravine, and, on gaining the level prairie, started in their long stride to the distant timber from which they could find other coulees leading down to the river bottom.

After Rada's curiosity had been satisfied, she leisurely climbed the bank of the ravine, and reaching the level of the upland, she spied in the distance the two wolves running fast ahead of her.

Rada concluded not to hurry. Her ankle was extremely sore, for one thing. She was tired from her exertions. Nothing would suit her better than to rest quietly for a long time. There was little need for hurry. The big hound was dead. Lemus and Bentick seemed to like each other so much of late they were always running and resting, feasting and denning up together. Let them run if they wanted to. She was as much out of danger now as they were.

So Rada rested, and in the natural course of

events Lemus and Bentick went on together as mates, each better pleased with the new companionship than they had ever been before.

Rada was not to fade out of the picture, however. There was much of life yet for her to live.

Lemus and Bentick, running east, did not linger long in the shelter of the timber they had sought. Six miles, and they were altogether too close to the threatening scents of the Matador. The same menacing dog smell that was characteristic of the slaughtered hound came to them on the breeze from the ranch quarters across the river. There were hounds there—far too many of them for safety. Word of the slaughter would soon be passed along and back to the ranch. Nothing but timber wolves could have killed the hound, and wolves on the Matador were something not to be tolerated. As the dusk fell, Lemus and Bentick set out again with their long stride on the hardest run they were ever to make. The long night through they journeyed; out of the ranch country and again into homestead territory. Instinct headed them due east, and as the night shadows slowly cleared, the roads, lanes, and cuts of traffic were revealed. They

followed these in order to avoid the fences and farms.

Morning found them at the elbow of the South Saskatchewan River, and close to a lively and thriving village. They had feasted, the early part of the night, on a calf taken from a farmer's herd, and were not too hungry to sleep as they crept under the approach of a bridge in the early dawn. Their natural instinct for protection and caution might have selected a less-frequented spot for rest, and a crossing of the river; but they were becoming experienced and wise in the conceits of man. This was a passage across the water, this roadway in the air. It was better than swimming the rapid current in water so cold as to chill and numb. At night, when all was quiet, they would dash across and take whatever chances there were from stray dogs that might give an alarm. Then again the long hard gallop to the east. They knew that somewhere, out yonder, was a better country for wolves than the one they were traveling through. They were sure that they must reach a safer place for denning and wintering. So they galloped on, and on. They would know it when they reached its boundaries.

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Lemus and Bentick were thoroughly rested when the dusk of the evening presaged for them a safe passage across the bridge. Their venture into the presence and haunts of humans was altogether foreign to the usual precautions exercised by wolves. It would not be included in this story of the itinerant of timber wolves had it not been accepted as a positive fact that super-intelligent wolves have done this very thing to save themselves a swim in the cold, rapid current of the Saskatchewan.

Lemus was more timid and exacting in his suspicions than was Bentick. When the night had fallen, black veiled by the low-hanging rain clouds, Bentick started across the bridge. Whimpering her encouragement to Lemus, she carefully proceeded until they reached the center. His courage had reached a point where he was satisfied with a trial when from the other side a belated farm wagon with swinging lantern came clattering into the roadway. The turn in had come suddenly from a side road, and completely blocked the bridge. The wolves were taken by surprise. It was a close run for Bentick to escape, and Lemus did not stop running for half a mile.

Bentick was less hysterical, and her brain functioned to better advantage than did that of the younger male wolf.

The male of the species has all the advantage in physical characteristics. The female has the brains. The psychological moment for the crossing came much later.

Two young men passed down the road to the bridge, about half an hour after the first try the wolves had made. Lemus and Bentick, crouched down in a grassy ditch just a few yards away, were waiting for their chance. The thought possibly seeped through their minds that if these humans could cross the narrow path without being blocked by wagons, two innocent itinerants might make it too.

If the young chaps walking home that night had known that less than thirty yards behind them two great timber wolves were following, they might not have proceeded so leisurely.

A night's run and the travelers were in the Q'appelle Valley, a favorite haunt for wolves. They crossed the canyon without stopping and climbed the eastern bank, to be met with a strong

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scent of their own species. It was a little sudden and disconcerting. Wolves unexpectedly met in that fashion are a contact filled with complications. Almost invariably there is a battle. Usually they avoid other groups, and if running in pairs will hesitate for nothing in passing save to threaten, and warn, and curse; and the proportions of Lemus and the aggressive front of Bentick furnished the pair of sojourners they met on the top of the canyon with a good and valid reason for not tarrying.

Before dawn they raided a rancher's herd of dogies, and broke their fast in regal fashion. They were vastly pleased with their progress, their cunning, their prowess, and their luck. They were in the bluffy country where the dried bunch grass impedes the passage. In the fall season this heavy growth bogs down, and soon starts to decay into a fertilizing agent to enrich the black soil below. If the season has been dry, the danger of a fire is a threat against the life of all who may find themselves in its embrace. On the open prairie, where the buffalo grass prevails, the danger is not so great. A keen horse and a rider fearless and resourceful may get through a prairie fire if the wind is driv-

ing it fast; but no human or animal can escape the horrible burnings of a bunch-grass fire.

Lemus and Bentick dunned down in a bluff of willow for their day sleep, tired but contented.

Long after sun-up, but before the west wind had started to blow, Bentick was aroused by a scent that alarmed and stunned her. She sprang into the open, and immediately realized the danger. Away to the northwest a fire was raging. It was traveling slowly now, but when the wind rose it would sweep ahead like a race horse, to destroy everything in its path. Her bark of alarm aroused Lemus, and together they viewed the situation. To escape they would have to cross the path of the conflagration. No use to run before it. With a strong west wind no speed nor stamina they possessed would save them. If they veered from their course of directly east to the northeast they might beat the blaze. That was their instinctive decision. With the long strides so characteristic of the running wolf, they ate up the distance. Crowning a hill, they saw a large lake that looked like a safe refuge. Its northern shore was heavily wooded, but the other three were devoid of growth where the shores blended into a swamp

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that extended for miles. The rushes and cat tails had lost their sap in the drouth, and from the muck and water up they drooped, dry, and as inflammable as powder.

When the west wind began to blow, and the smoke of the fire clouded the heavens and ran billowing and rolling across the surface of the grasses, the wild prairie people from miles about ran instinctively to the lake.

The farmers and ranchers, who had been wise enough to keep their foreguards plowed, were safe. Those who had neglected this suffered the loss of their buildings and crops, and in many cases, their lives.

Luckily the area of the fire east and west was not extensive. The right-of-way of the Canadian Northern Railway broke the fire, and prevented its spreading to the east. At its widest point the burning was not more than three miles, but the intensity of its nature was terrible. It died out at its southern boundary, the Klentil River, which drained Fisher Lake where Lemus and Rada had taken refuge, and into this angle it roared like a great blast furnace.

The birds escaped easily by merely flying across the lake. The four-footed refugees were not so lucky. Bentick saw a fox that she knew she wouldn't like, and she grabbed him as he passed her. Three lynx came quarrelling, spitting, and caterwauling into the marshes which were peopled now with antelope, some red deer, several moose, half a dozen bears, more foxes, more wolves, a few hundred cattle, and many mares, young horses, and colts. The heavier beasts, dreading the approach of the flames, rushed into the marshes, floundered in the muskeg, and were drowned or smothered. Many of the killers circuited the shore of the lake, avoided the marsh and, after swimming some distance, made the eastern shore of the lake and escaped. The preyed-upon animals, the innocents, fearing to share a path with the killers, remained in the marshes. When the fire reached the dried rushes and cat tails, nothing could save them.

Lemus and Bentick, after the slaughter of the fox, worked out a little spleen on some coyotes who dared to travel the same road with them. A wolf must indeed be badly frightened when he can't take a little time to torment and destroy a coyote. The

more perfect the ingenuity of the torture, the more satisfaction to the wolf.

The wolves stayed until the rest of the animals were gone. They had singled out for a feast a young bear, plump and prime from a diet of grubs and berries, and proposed to stalk him to a convenient and safe place where they could end his career with neatness and despatch.

Bruin was in no great hurry to take to the timber. All this fire and burning and rushing about appealed to his sense of humor. He had made no great fuss about getting to the lake, and there seemed no good reason for his hurrying away. He had seen the wolves, but the killers were no special novelty to him. He did not regard them in a friendly way, but he never feared them. He was cautious. Two wolves, big ones at that, leave little chance in a fight for one half-grown cub-bear. He knew that, and so he preferred to choose his battle-ground. As long as the wolves remained in sight he never left the shore line of the lake.

There were several other bears about in the near-by bluffs, and young Bruin might have joined forces with them, but he happened to know how

unstable a protection bears will offer each other in the face of danger. "Every man for himself," is a bear's motto. He was safer on the battle-ground of his own choosing than he could be anywhere else, and he knew it thoroughly well.

Lemus was getting impatient. Bentick was beginning to grasp the meaning of the bear's choosing to stay on the shore line of the deepest part of the lake. She would have been satisfied to try to rustle a supper anywhere else, rather than to run any special risk, but Lemus was so certain of his methods of slaughter, so sanctified in his own conceit, that nothing could change his intentions.

Bentick could stay out of this. This was his meal —this little fat fool of a bear. Bruin was busy turning over logs and stones in search for grubs when Lemus started to rush him. The bear saw him coming and made for the water. Lemus followed bravely but soon found that he had to exert all his power to overtake the swimmer. He overlooked one important fact: "The fatter they are, the higher they float." When he was all ready to grab the cub, he had to swallow, and strangle, and choke over a mouthful of water. He decided eventually

that this wasn't much of a sport after all. He was short of breath. His mouth was too big for swimming. The bear was going, high out of the water, swimming easily, when he spied the wolf turning and heading for the shore. In an instant Bruin turned and scrambled on Lemus' head, forcing it under water. He would have drowned the wolf had not Bentick plunged in and driven Bruin farther back into the lake.

Lemus dragged himself out of the water, a big sorry-looking killer. He had been licked good and plenty, and by a half-grown cub-bear. His place was in the deep woods. He was certainly not cut out for a mariner.

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RADA spent the first week of her isolation nursing her sore leg and ear. She had been able to cleanse her leg wound with the soothing saliva applied by her roughened tongue; but her ear needed attention that she could not give except by the drastic method of roughing it through the damp sand of the river bars. This was effectual, but a hard dose to take at any part of the first phases of the healing.

She had destroyed the body scent that made her stay within the borders of the Matador so risky, and, as game was plentiful, there did not seem to be much reason to do other than remain there, convalescing and philosophizing on her position.

Her isolation worried her but little. Like every other female she hardly appreciated her abandonment. She wanted to be alone for a while; then, of course, she would want a new mate, but she

would have felt a little easier in her mind if she had been the one to make the dash for liberty. It was something of a slash at her pride to have Lemus leave her.

She held no spleen against Bentick. If the older wolf got any satisfaction from mating with a wolf whose sole ambition seemed to be to grow and be masterful and dominating, Rada could only wish her luck.

At the end of the week Rada was running easily and her wounds were completely healed. She had thought of following after Lemus and Bentick, but delayed for some reason little understood by herself. She had run in closer to the ranch buildings, so near, in fact, that, had she not kept her scent subdued, she would have been in positive danger. From her place in the heavy timber, she experienced a peculiar fascination in watching the activities about the big establishment across the river. On occasion she would have a shock of fear as she saw the hounds set free and, led by the men, start off on a hunt. Once, three of the big chaps came running to the river, and she was sure she was to be destroyed,

but they had come only for a drink of the cold water.

One day a beautiful creamy-white hound gently loped to the river, not rushing with his nose to the ground in the fashion of the killers, but with the playful prancing lope of a petted show-off pup. Rada was thrilled. What a mate for a well-possessed, well-developed, well-intentioned female wolf who needed a mate! The temptation to approach the hound was great, but she drew back to wait for a better opportunity. That afternoon she went diligently to work to cleanse and dress her coat of fur which was beginning to show its age and lack of vitality. After half an hour of scrubbing in the sand, followed by a good bath, with her usual boldness she ventured into the open to chase a coyote for a few miles. Eventually she caught and worried it till the tortured beast bit back hard enough to enrage her. Killing the coyote then had a certain satisfaction, but Rada had another idea in her slaughter. She knew from the reckless appearance of the coyote on the prairie and from the scent that lingered, that, for some reason, the animal was

ready to take a chance. The fever of her passion days might be coming and the restless spirit this stimulates would explain her boldness.

Rada carefully dissected the body of the coyote. She tore out the sexual organs until she laid bare the glands and bladder of the beast. These she dropped on the ground and with her claws converted them into ribbons of tissue. Then she deliberately sat her buttocks into the mess, rolled and writhed on her back until her fur was fully impregnated with the scent always evident in the immediate pre-conception periods. She knew there was nothing in her natural body odors at this time to warrant any stimulation of desire on the part of a male dog or wolf, and this was the method she adopted to induce a recognition.¹

That night she crossed the river down at the white water where she could leap from stone to stone, climbed the easy slope to within a few yards of the ranch house, and then deliberately rolled

¹ This might appear to be a draft on the imagination to support the argument of ranchers who have had valuable dogs seduced away from their natural environment, but one needs no imagination. In dozens of cases, on study and investigation, some such post mortem surgery has always been revealed. No animal better than a wolf knows the compelling results of sex lure and this was what Rada was practicing.

and scrubbed her buttocks on the prairie grass. Following then a direct run to the rocks again she registered on both sides of the river, indulged herself in a few more reducing exercises, and then climbed the bank to the level of the plateau and lay down to wait for developments.

Meanwhile, over at the ranch there had been considerable profanity and some plain talking, when the superintendent of the Matador learned of the death of the big hound which had tackled Lemus. Rogers wanted the details of a lot of things. Where was Bassett, the man in charge of the kennels? How was it that the dog was allowed free? How or why and when, and a lot of explanations meaning little under the circumstances. The truth was that the big imported hound, Czar Peter, stud dog of the kennels, was dead, killed by wolves, with a mutilation so devilish in its conception and execution as to enrage any human being into a frenzy.

Speculation as to the nature and size of the wolves was bound to be indulged in. There were many tracks on the sand and gravel and it was hard to know which were the wolf and which the hound tracks, but it was conceded that the fight had been

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a good one until the assassin who tore open the abdomen of the hound had ended the battle.

The next morning both men and dogs were out and on the trail. They took up the scent of two wolves running east, and one smaller wolf, they trailed back to the river, where, as she had swum the stream, they lost her scent. Another day's hunt for tracks and scent of the smaller wolf proved fruitless. The hounds and men followed the two larger wolves for a few miles, and then as the trail scent dissolved in the sand hills north of Moose Jaw, they returned tired and beaten.

Rogers called Bassett into the office and gave him new and most explicit instructions. No hound dog, save Alexis, was to be loosed from his collar and chain except as Rogers himself ordered. Alexis was a young dog, pure bred, sired by the dead Czar Peter, with a dam of royal breeding. From a puppy he had been chosen by Rogers as his personal property. He had been carefully trained in his work of tracking, trailing, and killing; and educated to know but one trainer, have but one sleeping quarters, and eat but one sort of food. Rogers would use him eventually as a stud dog, but he was now

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anxious to give him size and strength. Already he was near his full growth, and his training program was much of the nature of that appointed for an athlete. His color was a pure white-sand-cream, with the head and front of his chest a dark brown, beautifully blended into the general color scheme of his body. He had never known the restraint to which the other dogs were subjected, and had never run with them on their killing expeditions. He knew but one master, and heeded but one, and that was Rogers.

One morning, about three weeks after the death of the stud dog, Alexis was startled from the gallery that ran about the ranch house by a scent brought in on the morning breeze. He ran excitedly down the slope, his nose in the air, trying to locate the course of this strange, stimulating odor. Back again to the house he galloped, then around to the kennels where the other dogs were on leash. Nowhere but out on the slope had the odor penetrated. He was too excited to bark, and, besides, barking might attract attention—something he did not want at the moment.

Eventually he located the spot on the prairie

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where Rada had left the lure and registration. From there the scent led him directly to the river, where he found it very strong. Anxiously he dashed up and down the banks, but lost it as he journeyed. At only one point it was strong. To a young dog this promise of adventure was too rich to be abandoned. The scent was becoming more emphatic, but from across the river. Dreading the rough rocks at the tip of the white water he boldly plunged into the current and strongly he swam allowing the water to carry him to an easy landing. Religiously he applied himself to the recovery of the trail. The scent led him to the high plateau beyond the edge of the ravines and to the east. It was now so well defined that he could follow at the long gallop which hounds find natural and best going for them.

An hour, and he was in the sand hills and the sense of location laid by the scent was confusing. Before he got it again, correctly enough to define his direction, he had crossed and recrossed his own tracks in a most puzzling fashion. At length he was sure of himself. He was now running east and crossing a territory entirely unknown to him. The scent was alluring, but its location and direction were

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still a puzzle. The reason for this, the young dog could not guess. Trailing was a new task for him, and he had never had experience in the sand hills. He did not know he was following a wolf. The chances were he thought of nothing more than that he might possess for his own desires a female of the species.

To the north he gathered a lot of smells little known to him. The south revealed nothing. His way lay to the east, for, though the scent left by the wolf was becoming indistinct, if he would win a love he would have to follow on.

It had been a hard day for Rada. She had been on sentry duty, watching the result of her experiment from early dawn. The moment she discovered that the young dog had located the scent, she set out for the east.

About nightfall she selected a bluff on the edge of Last Mountain Lake to bed down and wait for the hound pup she was leading away. She had just crossed through a pasture, where, with some young cattle, a flock of sheep were feeding. There was a homesteader's shack near by, and, as Rada rightly guessed, more dogs about the yard than, from gen-

eral appearances, could be afforded. But dogs were not bothering her. She had one coming to join her, beautiful, and as a pup amenable to treatment and correction. She would hold him and mould him. She would lead him back to his primal nature. As he grew, he would go back to what his forebears were.

It is bordering on the absurd to suggest that Rada really made such a mental estimate of the hound; but she probably guessed that in the dog much of the wolf breeding lay dormant, only awaiting a call to come to the surface.

From out the deepening dusk, at last, came Alexis. He still kept up that long, leaping stride peculiar to the wolf hounds, but he plainly showed his exhaustion. The scent led him to the edge of the bluff, but before he reached it Rada ran to meet him. He was startled and shocked into a show of temper. Springing to one side, his roached frill of hair showed his surprise and dismay. This wolf, then, was the sweetheart he had so urgently sought. No doubt of that, and she offered him every evidence of the joy she felt on his arrival at her side. After some hesitation, he decided to accept her

challenge. Both beasts were much too exhausted to do more than circle about each other and, with fawning, playful mauling tactics, show their appreciation of the other.

Rada played the part of hostess. She went over into the flock of sheep, selected a yearling ewe, separated it from the flock, and killed. The two feasted their fill that night, and to ward off a risk of attack from the farmer and his dogs, they ran about ten miles farther on to a brush where they rested for a couple of days.

Rada was not in her passion period, nor would she be for some weeks yet. Her lover was persistent in his belief that much of his desire should be gratified at once. The wolf gave him sufficient liberty to warrant continually the hope of his indulgence. She hunted with him, and showed him the wolf methods of killing. She led him into battles with the farmer's dogs, and stimulated within him a hatred and dread of humans. Together they ran and hunted, and together they denned up. Rada saw to it that he had little freedom during the day. This was the one radical change in his habits of life at which he rebelled. Domesticity had made his forebears and

himself dependent on the light of day. His eyes were not suited for the nocturnal chase, but Rada seemed to know that, if persisted in, the wolf in the dog would dominate his whole nature. His sense of smell was acute, almost as keen as her own, but he did not know sufficient of the wild to be able to differentiate as she did. Practice in this would help develop the accomplishment. Rada watched him carefully for any signs of loneliness. One night they had feasted on a farmer's veal, and had rested near the kill. It was not far from the house, and in the early morning the homesteader came to the door and whistled for his dog.

It was the first time Alexis had heard what resembled his master's call, and he jumped to answer. Rada, however, had been awake and watching him, and before he could break away, she fronted him, and with her peculiar insistent whine, that had within it all the subtle guile of an adventuress' plea, she held him back.

This decided her on their immediate future. Before her mating days came she must lead her lover far from the chance to return to the life from which he was being divorced.

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There were no stoppings now in the night runs, and many long periods of travel when the rains kept the humans out of sight. The Q'appelle Valley, with its tempting hide-outs, was passed through in a night, and the last right-of-way was crossed in the broad light of a morning's sun.

They were getting close to the big timber. There was no longer a chance of feasting from the herds. Although there was plenty of game, it took some hunting to get a meal. What they ate now they paid for in search and struggle. There was no longer a slaughter of the helpless and unwary. It was forever a battle of wits. Alexis had roughened to the life. His bark had coarsened to a mocking profanity of his former cheery note. He had grown, in the weeks, in strength and weight. The stimulating freedom of the wild was all to his advantage. He took on size and strength of magnificent proportions.

When Rada's mating period came, Alexis took full possession of his own. She had several candidates for her affections, and Alexis engaged in some fierce disputes with neighboring wolves, all of which terminated fatally for the wolves. Alexis was a killer, and it made the soul of the she wolf

to gladden, as she realized that not only was her particular mate beautiful, but he also had strength and skill which might sometime make him the king of the pack.

When she was heavy with pup he chose for her a better, safer den, far up on the side of a rocky slope where the ledges extended sufficiently to warrant safe, dry, warm dens under them. They had neighbors that might prove troublesome, and when Rada first approached the new location she realized that Alexis had in his ignorance chosen a spot that she would never approach unless the present occupants of the near-by dens moved out.

A lynx and her tom had a family of kittens so close at hand, that Rada knew her babies would never be safe if left alone. The lynxes were new to Alexis and his intimation that he go over and clear them all out was quashed by Rada. She knew by instinct and experience how a lynx can fight. She had, as a puppy, stirred up a family of bob-cat kittens, and after they had finished with her and her brothers, the wolf cubs had learned to keep a distance from the cats. Alexis persisted, however, in the preparations of his den. He spied the tom one

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morning sneaking home with a partridge in his mouth, and immediately gave chase. The tom, still holding the bird, made for a tree, and was out of the dog's reach in an instant. He abused Alexis shamefully from the safety of his perch, but that night he helped his wife move their kittens to a safer location than his old den was proving to be with the advent of the wolf and her dog mate.

The next neighbor to be adjusted did not move so easily, but Rada insisted that there was no room on the hill for a wolverine and her family. Alexis had never seen a wolverine, but he had been nauseated by the compelling odor that he met from time to time while running through the woods. Rada always lost her temper when she encountered this odor. She had a hatred of the big weasel which Alexis soon shared. Nevertheless, she was fearful of the result of the fight between them, which she concluded was inevitable. His days with her in the wild had increased his courage and strength. His long gallops and arduous hill climbing had so improved his wind and stamina that she felt he had no peers, at least among the wolves. She did not even except Lemus. That great wolf, her old mate, had

grown to be bigger, heavier, and stronger than any wolf she had ever seen or dreamed of; but he was no bigger than Alexis, and what the dog lacked in strength he excelled in spirit, courage, and method, and lightning speed in attack. He had in abundance what the wolf always lacks—the courage of attack. No wolf will fight another unless he is certain of the outcome. He always fights on the defensive when he is struggling on equal terms. Even in victory he is a coward. In Alexis, all the courage and optimistic spirit of a victor dominated. In this attribute he resembled the wolverine. The latter knows he is safe from attack, even from the big bears and cats, but he does not know the true reason. He credits his bloodless victories to his prowess. The real purpose the killers have in disregarding the challenge of the wolverine is not lack of courage, but class distinction.

Alexis knew nothing of this. All he knew was that some beast, giving off a most hellish odor, was hated and more than dreaded by Rada. Some time he would meet up with this beast and work out on him some of the spleen both his mate and himself had stored against their enemy. He had not long to

wait, and realized he had much to learn before the fight had ended. Fighting a wolverine called for a different type of attack than he had ever tried before.

He and Rada had been running together through a settlement in the hope of locating a chicken pen or a calf pasture, and were returning home when they ran into the horrible musty musk odor of the wolverine. He had evidently been waiting for them, for as they approached he walked out of some brush at the side of the open way and confronted them. He was a big chap, typically marked, with light brown body, darker legs, and two side bars of a dirty yellow. He was in good flesh, weighing possibly sixty pounds, and seemingly in such a state of mind as to make his offensive presence an intentional menace. He was the owner of the den on the hillside, and many times had seen Alexis come and go in his work of preparation of the new den for Rada.

This meeting was to show the dog and his wolf mate that new neighbors were not desired and would not be tolerated. Rada stood still and growled her defiance, but the wolverine neither

gave ground nor offered a show of offense. Alexis covered the space of thirty feet between Rada and the wolverine in two leaps, and then, to the surprise of the uncouth beast and also of Rada, he barked in the face of the wolverine. As the battler moved ahead with growls and snarls of defiance, Alexis leaped out of his way and continued barking and snapping at his head. This was a new form of attack that puzzled both the wolverine and Rada. The latter wanted to get into the fight, but she knew her condition prohibited it. She had full confidence in Alexis, and so she withdrew to one side, ready to lend a hand if necessary.

The wolverine, squared for battle, presented an odd front. His head was down near the ground, and his back arched so that every attack was at a disadvantage. Alexis, ever watchful of his fragile front legs, maneuvered the wolverine farther out into the open and, after an irritating vocal attack in the face of the beast, he rushed quickly at the nearest hind leg of his adversary, grabbed it, and held while he jumped to throw the beast on his back. The dog saw how easy that attack could be made to work, so he let go his hold and continued sparring. The

wolverine had discovered as well that Alexis' attack was dangerous. As the dog circled and barked and feinted, the wolverine watched him for that leg hold. He dared not take the offensive for he had realized, in the tug the dog had given his leg, something of the strength of this adversary with the open methods of warfare.

Alexis tried again to grab his adversary's right hind leg; but, as the wolverine hugged his legs in and swung his head and jaws to protect them, Alexis grabbed him by the ear and tumbled him like a clumsy wrestler again on his back. Once more Alexis had opened the wolverine's defense of his most vital parts—his throat and his abdomen—and yet the fear and rage of the wolverine kept the dog from direct attack. He would have to stay on the defensive.

Rada's excitement was as great as her pride in the fighting tactics of her mate. The dog was so lightning-like in his speed, and his attack was so perfect, that she realized he had this nasty beast at a disadvantage, and only an accident would prevent Alexis from killing him, and with but little damage to himself.

Alexis seemed to realize his one great weakness and guarded his front legs and feet perfectly. He was ever leaping in his attack. More than once when the wolverine had ventured, the dog had sprung clear over him to safety beyond; and yet his breathing was free and easy, while the wolverine was gasping from rage, excitement, and exertions.

The combatants had worked all around the open space they were fighting in, and the wolverine stood facing Rada. For the instant she forgot herself and rushed to grapple with the beast. Alexis saw the danger and, before the wolverine could reach Rada, the dog seized him by the tail and pulled with all his might. He did not let go but at every move the beast made to reach and release the dog's hold on his tail, Alexis would throw him the opposite way.

It was impossible now to keep Rada out of the fight. Both she and Alexis were worrying the wolverine, as the small dogs will worry a bear from behind. He was weakening from excitement and futile rage. He had not been able to sink his teeth into the dog who was beating him; and already he was bleeding from a dozen slashes which the canine

teeth had inflicted. He was not given an instant's rest. Their attack was continuous, and with every weakening moment his peril was more evident.

Rada, at last, seemed to realize that it was time for her to stand aside and let Alexis finish the fight he had started. She had seen a new sort of warfare, and was glorying in the result before her. Just how her mate would kill she could not as yet quite understand, but she would soon know. The wolverine did not back down nor attempt to escape the punishment being inflicted. He was game, and while he realized he was beaten, he was ready to fight to the last.

For his final effort, Alexis adopted the first mode of attack he had tried. He feinted at the wolverine's face, and seized his left hind leg, then, leaping, he dragged the wolverine over on its back. It had no time to recover from exhaustion, as it had had in the first instance, and Alexis seized it by the throat—a hold he never relaxed. Like a puppy shaking an old hat, Alexis, with his great strength, shook and tore at the throat of the wolverine. The beast struggled mightily for a moment, but he could not withstand the assault. Before he was quite dead,

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Rada rushed to tear open his abdomen. The wolf in her could not be withheld. She wanted to kill as both the wolf and the wolverine kills, in the most cruel fashion. Before she could even attempt her mutilation, Alexis dropped his hold on the throat of the wolverine, and bit at Rada so viciously that she wisely crept away from the battle.

There are certain ethics even in warfare to the death. Alexis seemed to realize this. He was killing a natural enemy; but that gave him no license to mutilate and cause unnecessary pain. This was his kill, not a wolf's, and no outlaw, not even his mate, would fight and destroy indecently if he could prevent it.

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LEARNING WOLF WAYS

THE big fight near the new den of Rada and Alexis had a quieting result on the nerves of the wolf. Her apprehension for the future was blunted, and her confidence in the prowess of her mate entirely established. She knew that, sometime, there would be another struggle for mastery between Alexis and a foe of her choosing. Up to the time and scene of this first battle, Rada never felt certain of the outcome of a struggle between Lemus and Alexis. Now she knew what the result would be.

Lemus was to be beaten. Long before he and Alexis would meet in combat, Lemus would fight and kill till he would be master of whatever pack he and Bentick entered. Rada was sure of that and, while there was a certain lingering grudge in her nature against both Lemus and Bentick, the truth within her mentality was centered about the

thought that her ambitions, more than her spleen, were furthering the suggestion of battle.

For the present, however, she was continually occupied with caring for, educating, and protecting her mate. He was an indiscriminate love-maker; and at least on two occasions she had followed him to learn of his mating with a farmer's dog, and with a wolf from the other side of the ridge.

There was nothing to forgive in either case. She would have resented the love-making if she had learned of it in time; but she had no grudge with wolves or dogs who favored her mate as the sire of their puppies. Their estimate of him coincided with hers and, instead of resenting the thought of the union, she accepted the situation as a compliment.

He was a great care and worry for her in other respects. She could not always accompany him on his raids, and he was a real hunter and provider. She feared for him in his ignorance of the ways of the wild. She shuddered every time she saw a porcupine, for she knew what a mess he would be in, if he met one while running alone. However, her fears for his safety were not entirely well founded. He was impulsive in many ways, but ex-

periences were teaching him fast. He had learned to stop carefully, and do a little thinking before he rushed to kill. He had on one occasion run twenty miles to get young sheep from a flock that had been visited before by marauders. He learned this afterwards. The night was clear and cold, and the exercise of his chase was needed to keep his blood in action. He knew where the sheep were, and thought he understood how to get to them. He had struck a wolf or coyote scent as he approached the pen; but disregarded it. As he stole around the corner of the stable, he heard the snap of a trap and then the whine of a young wolf. He had been thoughtless, and might easily have been in the same predicament the young dog wolf was in. Thereafter he never approached the barns or stables of a farmer.

His strangest experience had been with a big, black, fat animal without a tail, which had offered him a fight in the strangest fashion to be imagined. He had had his first sight of a bear. He was coming home over a trail he knew well, and on which he could speed along fast and safely, when he spied this new and comfortable looking beast, ambling

along with a peculiar sort of gait. The bear was not in a hurry, and did not propose to be hurried. Alexis approached him quickly, and from the rear. He was going so fast that the bear did not have time to get clear of his way before the dog had bitten him severely on the rump, assailing him at the same time with a spasm of sharp yelping barks, entirely unusual to Alexis, and undoubtedly uttered with the purpose of alarming and scaring the animal. The bite on the rump was severe enough to make Bruin fighting mad, and he started for Alexis with a rush. The dog escaped and circled to repeat his tactics, but by this time the bear was on his hind legs, striking and boxing with his front paws. As Alexis attacked, the bear would strike, and there was power behind his blow that the huge dog appreciated. His usual worrying tactics were not working out in this case, as they did with the wolverine, and Alexis began to be careless as the fury of the fight slackened. Two or three times he thought the bear, also, was indifferent and too easy to reach. At the last he reached to bite him on the flank, and like a flash the bear drew back and struck with one of his paws. He caught Alexis full on the

side of the head and knocked him tumbling and scurrying for twenty feet. Before the dog had ceased rolling he was scrambling to his feet and heading for home. He had learned another lesson. He would leave bears alone after this.

The den was on the very edge of the farthest northern boundary of civilization in a typical game country and as remote as a day's run from most of the other big killers who had denned up for the winter. Alexis and Rada, during the weeks they had been scouting, had come across but few evidences of other wolves, save itinerants on the run, and no traces of dens of either the bears or wolverines. In times past, a great fire had gone through the timber, leaving charred testimony to its destructive intensity. Districts of this nature are generally abandoned by the wild for a long time; but after the underbrush has grown again, the pioneer population of both killers and innocents will wander in to remain unmolested for a generation. To man, the region is useless and a desolation, but to the wild it is often a haven of refuge.

In the immediate region of the den, the wild life had disappeared. Even the porcupines were fewer.

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There was no chance of getting a sight of the larger game. No deer or moose had been seen for weeks. To Rada this peculiarity was not so apparent as it was to her mate. He kept her provided, but he was forced to go considerable distances in his kills. He was showing travel stains and the penalties of his unnatural life were leaving their mark.

Rada had tempted and, in her selfish soul, had controlled the destinies of a big, weak-willed animal intended by nature and man for a purpose in life different from that in which he was employing his days. He was a killer by instinct, but belonged to that class who know a master and are amenable to discipline. There was a place for him in the economy of settled life, but he was far out of it as the mate of an outlaw female wolf. He could not exist long as he was, and he was becoming aware of this.

There was a reason for the disappearance of the other denizens of the wild and, while it had never occurred to Alexis, to Rada it had been perfectly clear. The hound was too noisy. He was not given so much to demonstrations of barking as are smaller dogs; but as a hunter of small game he was a big

failure. He was driving out of the country the very type of game both his mate and himself needed, on which to exist. When they first denned up there were plenty of all sorts of feeders. The browsing deer, moose, and the odd species of antelope were all gone now from a district they had formerly favored on account of the abundant underbrush on which they could graze.

The barking of Alexis in his hunting was the outcome of the pure excitement that possessed him as he pursued. Had he not been faster and quicker than the wild he was chasing, both he and Rada would have long since been forced to move, in sheer need of food.

With the winter closing in, Rada began to understand their precarious position, and gathered an inkling of what was in store for her. Her puppies would not arrive for three months, and already the prolific nature of the dog was manifest within her body. She could not hope for a respite of the penalty to be imposed upon her. Eventually she would suffer the disappointments sure to follow the unnatural process of life she had encouraged by her ambitions and foolish pride.

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To hold her newly acquired mate, she had fostered all the unnatural evidences of passion that followed her love for Alexis, with the result that her pups would be born three months before nature intended they should be. If she had to search for food in the snow and extreme cold, her pups would perish. That would be one great danger. There were others equally great that she would have to take into consideration.

It was her idea that precipitated their moving out of the district at this time of the year. Deserting her den with the ground frozen and the snow already threatening seemed absurd and suicidal, but her instincts suggested the safety that cowardice and improvidence find in a communal heritage. The wolf is too fearful of results. His cowardly nature demands company, and he cannot endure the thought that another may possess what might be his, either by struggle or stealth.

Writers, long-distance naturalists, have done themselves proud in their discussions of the wolf pack. There have been so many versions of a sensational nature of any incident in which wolves have had a prominence, that the public at large have

come to believe in the assembling of vast numbers of the four-footed desperadoes. This phase in any study of wolf nature and habits has a place here, and what is included may help to make clear some of the little-known and little-dreamed-of facts. Much discussion has been aroused in the past about any emphatic declaration, and so it is not suggested that this is the last word in the argument. There exists now no such thing as an organized wolf pack—and such is the verdict of northerners, trappers, traders, and explorers—men who should know if such a pack had ever existed.

There is a grouping at intervals of individual wolves, for some specific purpose or some natural reason. There may be occasionally a number of hangers-on to a hunting group of wolves that have rallied to follow a deer or moose; and at the kill these may assert, in vocal protest, their rights to a share of the kill; but immediately after the feast has ended the group will disperse, possibly never to meet in entirety again.

Then there is what might be termed the "family pack." A wolf and her mate may raise a family of four or five pups. Their den may be somewhat

isolated, and the pups may grow to maturity with only their own kin about them. In the mating season some may be lost; but, if the district has sufficient game or is within an easy run of herds that may be raided, the chances are that both male and female pups will bring their mates into the family pack. But this cannot last. It is a condition entirely foreign to any animal with such a cowardly, suspicious, jealous nature. As the mating, on the part of the male, is merely an incident, and often an accident on the part of the female, family and tribal troubles intervene to break up the pack. Under any circumstances, it could not last out a season.

Rada knew well that somewhere in the big woods a larger community of wolves existed than in the district in which they were located. Her primal instincts for self-protection were beginning to assert themselves. What was the loss of one den, when, with a powerful, sagacious fighting machine for a mate, another might be raided, its occupants driven off or destroyed, and her comfort and a better provision for her wants secured. The virtue of a migration now consisted in the provision for the

future needs, primarily; but in the mind of the wolf there was another reason. It would be novel to infer that she had an ambition for her mate, but it would not lead into speculation to suggest that she would use his skill, prowess, courage, and cunning to fight to conquer and to eat. There was the one essential to her being now—her pups. This, naturally, would come first, but following close after was the thought of retaliation and revenge. The more she thought of Lemus, the more his desertion ate into her nature.

She had not well considered her foolish escapades and wilful transgressions of the simple laws of self-preservation so essential to the wolves. She had never realized that she herself had transgressed to the point when Lemus was bound either to punish her physically or leave her for the sake of their safety. She would like to have Alexis fight and kill him. It was the wolf law, and she was a wolf. She had no love for Bentick, neither had she a grudge against her. She knew better than to attempt to battle, or even provoke her. Bentick was super-wolf in all the tactics of procedure, both of peace and of war.

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Rada was determined to search out the big pack and take her hound mate with her.

There is little of interest to record of their progress to the northeast. It was slow, for Rada could not travel fast and was forced to rest often. Alexis was cheerful, ever busy with his hunting and moderately successful. Rada did not go hungry, although at times the dog could have added more fuel to his own internal fires.

Several times they ran into abandoned camps where the lumbermen had lived during their work in the virgin timber. On one of the well-made and well-beaten trails leading to a camp, they encountered a young bear. He was fat and foolish and the best that could be said of him was that he had his courage with him in large packages.

Rada saw him first and immediately began to stalk him for prey. Alexis caught the scent and sight of him at about the same time. Remembering his previous experience with this rumpless, fat type of boxer, Alexis held himself in check with great ease. The bear had ample time to climb a tree out of danger, but he could not see a great risk in stay-

ing on the ground and slapping a wolf into mind-ing its own business.

He had not seen Alexis, and for a wonder the dog was silent as the grave. Rada had already begun to circle and tease him when he caught sight of Alexis. This larger enemy was more than he had bargained for, and he started for a near-by tree. He was too late. Both battlers grabbed him and both worried him to death after they had him on the ground. He gave them all he had, but he knew nothing about fighting wolf fashion. Before the fight had progressed far, Alexis took the battle over and drove Rada away. The dog had the bear down, with a death grip on his throat, but he never let the wolf get the chance to tear open his exposed abdomen.

The travelers feasted a day and a night on the carcass of the bear. It was a much-needed series of meals, for they had dined sparingly enough on their journey. Rada felt the need of rest, too, and Alexis had been clawed rather severely in his hind legs and flanks. They denned up for a few days, and Rada undertook to educate Alexis in the gentle art

of keeping his bark behind his teeth. Dogs might have use for it, but wolves could not tolerate the meaningless yap yap. It was silly. How long would the game, their natural food, last if frightened continually by a hunter with an alarm like that? Just what process of reasoning she used in indicating her desires to Alexis is only to be guessed at, but if results acquired in some cases are favorable to a change in all, it is supposed that the dog kept his bark correlated to his bite.

Another four days they ran, again into a district where man smells were encountered more frequently, and the scents lingered more persistently. The bush holds all the odors more emphatically and certainly than the open country where the winds have a freer play.

The snappy cracks of hunters' rifles were prevalent during the day, and at night the smells peculiar to a camp outfit were carried through the aisles of the big bush. On the last day's run, several wolf-denning smells were carried to Rada and Alexis, but the travelers did not attempt to locate them. That at last they were in the great community seemed to satisfy them, although there was

bound to be little cause for congratulation on being located where individual effort would be balked and hindered. Misery likes company, and success is nearly always promoted by personal independence.

Alexis had met, and seemed to relish, the man scent they had run into. Rada watched him closely, and on one occasion when the smells indicated that dogs, men, and horses were together, and the camp odors were tolerant and inviting, she was certain that he would bolt on a tour of investigation. He seemed satisfied to remain with her, however, rather than to experiment with something he little understood.

Two days later he was running through some underbrush that broke abruptly into a clearing when, at the sharp crack of a rifle, he was stung slightly in the fleshy part of his neck behind the ears. The jar was sufficient to tumble him head over heels, but instantly he was up and away out of danger. The lesson was being brought home to him that man was indeed an enemy.

Alexis could hardly understand why he should be punished. He knew man and man should know

him. As a puppy, he had heard the short, snappy bark of the thing held so oddly, and which bit and killed from such a distance. He resented the shooting, the punishment, and the imposition. In his resentment, he did not stop to realize that, having outlawed himself, he could hardly complain if an outlaw's treatment was accorded him.

It was a week before he could run and hunt again, and he had taken quite a starving before he dared follow any big game. Rada did her own hunting while he was denning up, and her best efforts could hardly be called a meal. Venturesome brush rabbits were about the best she could find.

Alexis had ample time to study the conditions of life about him as he lay in the brush on the rocks over his den. He had learned much of the first lessons of the wild. Where could a danger come from? The laws of self-preservation demanded a survey of his position. The camp of men on the trail heading north would always be a menace. He would be forced to watch them. This was the greatest risk he was to take. The wolves about him never caused him a second thought.

One late afternoon when the light was fading fast

into night, Alexis, hunting about four miles from his den, ran abruptly into a maze of wolf-scent. He slowed down his pace, and stopped to look about him. He was able to locate in a somewhat indefinable fashion, a group of wolves sniffing, scratching, and parading about what seemed to be a sort of communal registry center. He knew they existed; he had passed and smelled them over often, but they seemed local and unimportant as compared to this. As he trotted over to gather news and meet the wolves, many of the smaller ones fled in dismay, and even the males whose courage held true stepped aside carefully and with stiff legs, their muscles tensed ready to go into action at an instant's notice. Alexis stood nearly a foot taller at the shoulders than the largest wolf before him, and he must have weighed forty pounds heavier. The killers about him recognized him and, while giving him no welcome, offered him no opposition or show of resentment. Possibly all of them had seen him before, running with Rada; and conceded the hound the favors and rights of his mate. The communal laws of wolves are unwritten and sufficiently elastic to admit of the entrance of any member of the

dog family. His was the right, and his the risk. If he could stay alive, he might live. If he weakened? —but then weakness is tolerated in no community.

The visit to the registration post became a habit with Alexis. With the same purpose that humans will assemble around a post office to gather the news from the outside world and exchange homely, local greetings with their own kind and type, so do wolves either before the break of day or in the dusk of the evening foregather at a registration post or tree.

In the days immediately before the coming of the first big snow both Rada and Alexis were busy hunting. She seemed to realize her need of extra strength and her zest for food did not go unrewarded. Alexis, too, had made a substantial kill, and at the same time satisfied a real grudge. A young lynx, fat and tasty, had been busily engaged in digging out some loose dirt, bark, and dead twigs in a rock cleft when Alexis first spied him. The nose of the cats is not very helpful in warning of danger, and the dog was able to creep close to him from behind. A rush, and Alexis had him fast by the back just above the kidneys. He bit so hard

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that the cat seemed helpless with a form of paralysis, which did not affect its lungs, for it screamed lustily. Alexis did not release his hold. He was strong enough to carry the lynx for some distance, his neck outstretched so that it could not harm him except through some minor scratches on the breast. When he reached a pile of rocks, he beat it to death on the jagged edges of the boulders. It was a task no wolf would have dared to attempt, for fear of a counter-attack from some other member of the family, for the lynxes are family and individual in their relationships. Alexis was in luck. Evidently he was born under the right star.

13

THE RALLYING CALL

THE morning Rada's pups were born, Alexis heard the first rallying call of the wolves. The note came from the east, not wholly intelligible. The inflections were different from the howls indulged in commonly by the wolves of the district. There was a diapason note which ran from the guttural to the hysterical half-cry of a wounded animal. This was followed by three or four individual barks or roars, and repeated. This constituted the alarm. It was coming closer. As Rada heard it, she signalled to Alexis her interest and desire for him to join in the attack, for that was what it meant.

Closer came the call, and at last Alexis grasped the full meaning of it. Some wolf was running a victim too large for him to handle alone, and was calling for help. The big beaver dam, a few hundred yards from the hill where the den was located,

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was the only open country about; and as the calls seemed heading that way Alexis dashed for the edge of that ground. He had not long to wait. Up through the timber came a big buck, running easily, but with a look of terror in his eyes. As he spied the open before him, he changed his direction and headed for it. This brought him close to where Alexis, hidden behind some scrub, was standing tense and ready to spring. The dog, unused to running a kill in the open, dashed at the head of the deer, hoping to seize him by the throat; but the buck quickly lowered his head, caught the dog on his horns, and tossed him to one side, wounded and bleeding. One prong of the antlers had gashed his throat, and the other had been forced into the angle of his front leg and body. Alexis lay stunned for a moment, but he knew sufficient of wolf law and the ethics of the kill to know that if the wolves found him wounded and bleeding he would die long before the buck could be caught. In spite of all his pain and soreness, he managed to run to near his den, when he circled away from it again and back to where he knew the pursuing wolves would drop his bloody trail to follow the bigger kill.

When the buck and the pursuing wolves had gone over the dam and into the big bush beyond, Alexis made for his den to care for his wounds. He had stayed out long enough and had rolled so effectively in the snow that there was no trail of blood to his den. Rada did not allow him in the den while she was laboring. She could not be certain as to the full nature of her mate. He might undertake to make a meal of her puppies. Alexis, the philosophical chap, lay down in the snow in a hollow near by, to examine closely and cleanse carefully his wounds; then deciding that it would do no special harm to continue his hunting, he loped over the ravine, reached the trail that ran by the camp, and boldly trotted past the buildings. Luckily, there were no dogs about. They were sleeping inside, and it was too early for the camp to be awake. Alexis examined the terrain all about, registered, and scratched his defiance on the snow. Then he broke his trail to lead the dogs off the direction; made the side jump, reversing in the air for twenty feet, and broke into a run back home. He was feeling better. The soreness was muscle bruise, and the pain was not from the gashes.

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He had hardly reached the hill at home before he heard the rallying call of the wolves again. They were closing in on the buck who had run in a great circle and was heading again to the country from which he had started. Alexis gauged the distance and direction, and ran to meet them. He had a defined purpose in mind and proceeded to work it out. He was sure that in the open he could throw the buck; whereas he would be handicapped in the timber. Once he had it down or where he could reach its throat, the kill would be easy. Making the throw was the big effort, but it was worth trying.

Before the buck passed him as he stood waiting, he ventured into its line of vision, running easily along. It was sufficient to head the buck back across the open beaver meadow. The wolves were not in sight, as they were trailing noisily along nearly half a mile behind. They could be heard, quarrelling and protesting, panting and choking as they gasped for breath, for this was the first run of the season and the big buck had set them a hard pace. He could easily have outdistanced them and likely within an hour have lost them altogether had not Alexis, the young Russian hound, spoiled the buck's chances.

Try as he would, the buck could not throw off the hound. In the bush the dog was at a disadvantage with the stout underbrush slapping him in the face; but as they approached the open, Alexis drew up beside him and tried to figure out how he could get a hold on the throat of the beautiful animal. The hound was running between the buck and the timber, and keeping him in the open meadow. Two or three times he tried to reach the buck's throat, but that brush of bony prongs was dropped in time to ward him off. Then he tried new tactics which proved to be successful. He jumped and threw his weight against the front legs of the deer. He took a tumble in the effort, but the scheme worked. The buck, thrown off his balance and stride, stumbled to his knees, and rolled clear over before he could recover. Alexis was up and sprang for a throat hold before the buck quit rolling. He fastened his fangs and hung his full weight, tearing and ripping, while the buck, in trying to get up, stumbled over his hanging body. There could be but one end, and that came soon. Alexis was drenched with the blood of the beast, but he never let go his hold. He pulled the buck to his knees, and

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eventually threw him over on the snow to die.

Within ten minutes, the big hound, with his throat hold, had done what four wolves could hardly have done in half an hour, and then only by hamstringing and ripping in the most hellish fashion at the abdomen.

Alexis was bloody from his nose to his toes. He scoured in the snow, and rolled and burrowed in it until, by the time the wolves came, he was ready to defend his kill, or divide if he thought it prudent. They came on bold enough, nine or ten of them—seven were males, all big husky chaps, stout enough to warrant a struggle if deprived of their share of the kill, but cowardly enough to recognize the master killer who stood before the feast.

Alexis tore at the flank of the deer until he had loosened a great slice of the tender meat. This he bore away to Rada in the den on the hill. In return for this favor she rolled over to show him her five puppies, all busy at the nipples of her body, taking their first meal. They were wonderful babies. Both parents had lavishly contributed, but the stronger nature of Alexis dominated. The males had his color, and all were of abnormal size for wolf pups.

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Rada applied herself to the feast Alexis had brought. She could never have guessed how he had secured it. No wolf could have sufficient elasticity of imagination to picture one dog throwing and killing a buck red deer as Alexis had done.

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THE TRAP

LEMUS and Bentick had not tarried long in the Q'appelle Valley. As they slid down the cut banks on the west side, they discovered too many signs of the presence and activity of man. The scents were not fresh enough to cause immediate alarm, but they were all of recent contact.

Bentick, who generally ran in advance, slowed down her pace, and kept her nose in the air, trying to discover a reason for the many strange evidences of an apparent danger. At a little patch of furze brush, whose leaves were fast being distributed over the ground, she stopped short, held fast by the presence of an emphatic scent peculiar only to man, and man of a type. She picked it up first from the leaves at her feet. It was most potent, and entirely disagreeable. Cautiously she attempted to trace it back to a source, but there was apparently no beginning. Then she tried to relate it to the tracks

she could easily follow, where a man had wandered through and about the thick brush. Patiently she worked at the problem. She picked up the scent and traced it back to where the man had entered the brush. Then she walked carefully around the bluff, and noted where he had left it, and proceeded to his horse tethered at the foot of the hill.

The presence of the strange scent excited her curiosity, but it seemed to lead her nowhere. It was evident only at intervals. The big wolf had crawled away into a bunch of weeds to sleep, and growled his impatience at Bentick's efforts to stir him into action. She insisted, however, and at last he roused himself, snarled a protest and followed her as she circled the bluff of furze. They had not gone far when from down the wind came the notice of a fresh kill. It was just breaking day, as the wolves, following the new scent, climbed out of the valley and broke into a run, hoping to get in on the feast of calf some wolf or other killer had prepared for breakfast.

The kill had been made by two young female wolves, and there was enough for all and to spare,

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for it was a yearling heifer whose life had been destroyed.

Long they feasted, and well, till at last Lemus was surfeited, and started back to the bed in the weeds he had occupied when roused by Bentick's anxiety. The female wolf, still intent on her meal from which she had been driven several times by Lemus, as she uncovered an especially dainty portion he thought he wanted, did not notice the direction he had taken. The big beast, dulled and sluggish from weariness and overfeeding, lumbered down the cutbank and headed directly for the bluff of furze.

He took in a few sniffs of the strange odor, tried to follow it up, and, as it faded out again, decided to forget it. But from somewhere near, the scent insisted, and he took up its direction again. This time his nose in the air, he gained a knowledge of its presence deep in the center of the furze, and he determined to locate the source. To do this he was forced to follow a track made by a man who had pushed his way through the thicket a day or so before. This was something Bentick or any other

smart wolf would never have done; but Lemus had dulled perceptibly of late, and now was stupid from gluttony. He was nearing the source of the peculiar odor.

He was so intent on his quest that he had not noticed the stout birch sapling that had been bent down so close to the ground as to allow hardly more room than was necessary to pass under. He did not notice the man smell that was evident on the trunk and in the branches of the sapling. His curiosity and stupidity made him reckless. The immediate tangle of furze and weeds before him was forced easily enough. Lemus was left-footed in the same fashion, and for the same unknown reason, that men are left-handed. He thrust his left paw into the mass before him and then dragged it sharply back, making ample head room. Then he pushed forward. He had succeeded in getting his shoulders nearly through when he set his paw down hard on a stout, smooth piece of wood. Something snapped, and something else gave way with the result that the bent-over sapling tossed itself back to its erect position, carrying Lemus with it. The big fool wolf had been caught in a "loop" or "throw" trap, possibly the most effective

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of all the devices used for the purpose. He had, without knowing it, partially miscarried the purpose of the trap. That thrust forward of the left paw had displaced the loop somewhat, so that when the plate was sprung the noose gathered about the neck and shoulders of the beast. If the trappers had used their heads a little more effectually, it would have been a simple case of hanging.

The sapling and rawhide strand had not lifted Lemus entirely off the ground, but his toes gave him little support. He struggled and foamed with rage, clawing at the rope and gasping for breath, as his strenuous attempt to escape used up his wind. The brush all about was threshed down, for the wolf circled and whirled in his fight for life. He could get no hold that would enable him to re-bend the sapling, which was stout enough to hold him upright and helpless. His line of vision was limited, while his attempts to howl his rage ended in a strangling bellow not unlike that the calves he had murdered gave forth in their death agonies.

Bentick had not even gone back into the coulee to search for Lemus. She had feasted until she, too, came under the spell of gluttony, and then had

dragged herself into a discarded cave that transients among the wild had used for convenience. There she fell asleep. She awakened hours after, stretched herself lazily, and moved out to search for water, and to discover, if she could without too much trouble, her mate. If he turned up soon she was ready to travel with the fall of night, but traveling alone would prove no hardship to her. As she went to the coulee bottom for water, she naturally selected the paths they had always taken. As the wolf neared the bottom land she made the discovery that shook her loose from her lethargic state. Her unusually keen brain was alert and active instantly. Lemus was stretched upright by the strength of the sapling, so that only the toes of his hind feet were on the ground. The noose of the "throw," gathered in his left front foot from immediately behind the elbow, and forced it against the side of his head. The knot of the noose was against the right ear of the wolf, and, while breathing was possible, yet the strain of the rope was huddling the muscles of his throat, threatening to shut off his breath altogether.

As Bentick circled the sufferer, he made several

attempts to struggle free, feebly circling and writhing in his bonds. Bentick was at a loss as to how she could help her mate. The more she circled the problem, the more intense became her concern. She mounted beside Lemus' body and tried to bite through the rawhide rope with her incisor teeth, but to no avail. She would have to get her molars set into the tissue before she could exert sufficient pressure to gnaw the tough strands through, and the rope clear of Lemus' head was a foot and more above hers. She jumped to grab it in her teeth, and when she added her weight to that of her mate, the sapling was hardly bent. She loosed her hold, and stood back to examine the results of her bite. She had made an impression on the rawhide strands. No doubt of that. She rested a moment, and tried again. This time she would grab lower down, take the rope further back between her grinders, and keep chewing till she broke through.

Carefully she prepared for the spring. Lemus seemed to realize that she was attempting to free him, and his big eyes, glazed with the keenest suffering, beamed with intelligent gratitude.

Bentick had a perfect understanding of this

problem, and what it meant to her. It was the work of man, her enemy. She had escaped only by the cunning and caution of a typical wolf nature. Lemus might have escaped, but his stupidity and nothing else had led him into the noose. He should have known that the strange scent, peculiar to nothing in their life, contiguous to that of the man, had an object, a design. This was man's method of war on them, and Bentick was intent now on circumventing its purpose.

Carefully she gauged her distance, then quickly she crouched and sprang. She caught the rope far back in her jaws and, as the weight of her body struck Lemus he moaned in distress. Bravely did Bentick hold her grip, and industriously did she bite and grind. One moment, and the muscles of her neck and throat began to protest; two minutes, and she could feel with her tongue the giving way of the strands. Just a little longer—down came the bodies of the wolves. Bentick lighted easily on her feet, but Lemus collapsed in a heap on the brush. It took a little time for Bentick to solve the puzzle of the noose and drag it clear from Lemus; and when freed the big wolf struggled to his feet and

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staggered after her to the river where he threw himself down on the water's edge to quench his maddening thirst.

After an hour of rest, Bentick succeeded in rousing Lemus, and together they slowly followed down the river bottom to the edge of the lake. There, Lemus, seemingly unable to proceed further, stretched himself on the cool sand, and broken in spirit and completely exhausted, went to sleep.

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ANOTHER HUMAN INTERLUDE

“WELL, men,” said Travis, “I agree with you that poison and trapping will have a result, but not the one you hope for.”

“The company wants results. That is why you men were brought together. You may all have one idea, or there may be ten plans, one to each of you, for getting all the wolves out of this district. You have the winter before you, with every comfort we can provide. Now go to it, and work out your own plans.”

Dave Moran was the man selected by the *Ætna* Silver and Copper Mining Company to take charge of the group of ten experienced wolf men whom they had assembled in Winnipeg, and sent out to the Balsam Lake Camp in the early fall, to rid the district of wolves. For years this community of wolves had been growing, and, although on several occasions determined efforts had been made to thin

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them out with traps and poison, no marked improvement in conditions had been noted.

The wolves had become exceedingly bold and, although no attack had ever been made on the men of the company, the reputation of the district, the camps, and the freight road was so marred by dangerous experiences, and these experiences so illuminated by the keen imaginations of the correspondents, that the company was having considerable trouble in getting sufficient freighters to handle their necessary annual supplies.

Travis was a Wyoming man, versed in wolf lore, habits, and laws, and religiously devoting his life to their extermination. His success had been marked, because his methods took him away from the old-time idea of trying to outwit the beasts.

"I have never given myself credit for being as cunning as a wolf," he would say. "The most of them have forgotten more guile and sin than we men will ever know; but I have come to believe that they can be made to destroy themselves faster than any poison, trap, or throw method ever devised. You can set out a hundred traps in this district, and the betting is safe that at the end of

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three days ninety-nine of the traps will be sprung and possibly one puzzled little bitch wolf who never had a mate, and has been all her days doing her own providing, will wander into one, and die miserably.

"These are not mountain wolves. The chances are that every den in the district holds a pair of itinerants who have, in one season or another, traveled all over Manitoba, Saskatchewan, or Alberta; possibly have wintered in Arizona and summered in the Peace River Country. They are experts on traps, and just laugh their heads off at attempts to catch them.

"Then the poisoners have much to learn. I can remember when we used to ride across half the state of Wyoming, leave poison every five miles in a buffalo carcass, and reap as a reward from fifty to one hundred wolf skins. That can't be done now. These devils are much too wise. They have come to know that a choice carcass or a cut of meat, conveniently placed, with man tracks and the man scent about it, is good meat to leave alone. When folks can drop wolf-poison bait by airplane

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and eliminate the man from it, we can hope for some success.

"For trapping, I think the 'throw,' or a 'loop,' is the best bet, but even that has failed. The wolves may be fooled into the 'throw,' but how about the mate who goes out to hunt up her husband, and finds him hoisted in a throw, still alive? Nine times out of ten he gets one leg into the loop and it can't choke him, and then she deliberately climbs his body to chew the rawhide rope that formed the loop. Anybody here had that experience? Of course, you have.

"I am not claiming my method is the only feasible plan, but I do know it breaks the spirit of the wolf, by breaking up his communal life. Get him into a lonesome career and a reckless state of mind, and then you can catch him with a little salt on his tail.

"Let me explain my plans as I direct the arrangements for the drive we will make during the next month. I would start operations at once, but I want the wolves for miles about to become used to us; familiar with, and fearless of us. The food is still

plentiful, and although one big snow has come, the going is likely to be good all through the timber. We will send the dogs back to the city this week. Those alarm clocks only hinder the perfection of our plans.

"We will work in pairs. Any two of you can pair up. Joe Davidson and I will arrange our plans. By tomorrow morning be ready so that we can make a start. Taking this camp for a center I want you to walk in a radius of six miles; that is, six miles from this point in as straight a line as you can gauge it on your compass. Blaze your way on your left hand, going out. Trim the branches of leaves and break them to point the way to the central camp. I want your trails like the spokes of a wheel.

"Take four traps with you and leave them loose, unset and unfastened, on the trail at regular intervals. I will have bait ready for you when you leave. I want every wolf to become familiar with a trap. I want the smell of the steel to be known and not suspected. I want him to think that the bait is part of the trap. The bait I will use is quite different, and stimulates him in a strange fashion.

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I sent, a few months ago, a vial of this to the ranches about the Cypress Hills, but they did not use it as I directed and the results were not entirely satisfactory. They only trapped one female, and half a dozen others were destroyed in a fight. They should have had forty, if there were that many in the hills."

The next morning the men started out with their traps, and by night all were back again.

The following morning they were given a little cotton rag into which was squeezed some high-smelling cream cheese. This was to be pinned on a sapling too weak to hold a porcupine, and high enough so that the wolves could not easily reach it. They were to watch for tracks, and study them to gather what was in the minds of the wolves.

The third day they were to clear away whatever bait had been left and bring it in. If the snow made the tracking good, the fourth day they were to attach a string to the bait and drag it on the snow parallel to the used trail, back to the camp. To be quite certain of making a plain trail, one man was to stay in the blazed path. They were to read from the tracks the effect of their efforts on the wolves.

At the end of the week, Travis was able to sum up their progress in terms of congratulation to all the men.

"Let us get from the readings of the tracks the measure of our success. There was nothing to observe the first day, of course. The second day we learned that every trap had been fully investigated, which was exactly what we desired. The third day, after the bait had been set out, there was every evidence of a show of temper among the beasts. The traps had been neglected, but there had been sufficient scratchings and registrations to warrant our believing that something about the bait annoyed them.

"I discovered this bait by accident. We were trailing in the Coeur d'Alene mountains, and at camp dinner one night I handed an old Indian a pot of the cheese. He took it, and, as the gentle aroma lifted his war bonnet, he passed it back with a grimace: '*Lumpa we takə sempis abigone*,' (Smells like an unclean wolf), he remarked.

"Now, the traps have been noted and neglected. In the presence of the bait, they were forgotten. When we brought the bait in, it was followed, close

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to the beaver dam, by the males, at least. If we were to go out now, set the traps, and distribute that bait again, I think we would get wolves, but the stage is not yet set for the big drama.

"Next week we will give them something else to occupy their minds."

Travis and Davidson had builded themselves a hideout twenty feet up in a big Gilead tree that stood close to the north trail. There was quite an opening where the bush had been cleared to enable the freighters to clear a rock, and on the other side only a thin fringe of brush. At this point the clearing lay between the trail and the beaver dam, so that the men in the tree could watch both open spaces. The nights had been moonlight, but towards morning the sky became cloudy and overcast. The men were waiting for the full moon before going farther with their plans. Two days later they had selected two trees bordering on the beaver dam, and about ten feet up, where they placed the bait. This consisted of a small roll of absorbent cotton which had been saturated with a solution obtained from the sexual glands of a female dog, removed while she was in heat.

The bait had been placed in both trees at noon, and the winds already were carrying the message far away through the timber. Before dark that night the men were hearing, from three points of the compass, the long love notes of the wolves. They were preparing for a journey. From somewhere a sweetheart was sending out her odorous message, and to each particular gallant it was a personal summons. The conceit of the animal would not permit a rival. He was alone in the affections of some desired love, and was, of course, ready to fight to the death for his own. This was the state of mentality Travis wished to arouse in the wolves. The old unclean mates were to be left behind. It was to foster in the females a spirit of resentment that the bait of the high-power cheese was used. If the males left to hunt up new sweethearts, the females would follow to wear out their spleen in desperate combat.

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RADA and Alexis, in their den less than two miles away on the other side of the beaver dam, got this new odor in full force almost as soon as it was placed outside. The dog, not quite gathering the meaning of the appeal, decided to watch for developments.

He had been watching the activities of the men, and trying to understand the meaning of it. He had followed down the trails, had discovered the traps, got a good whiff of the outspoken, unchained cheese; but it meant little to him. The domesticated part of his nature, always dominated when men were about. He had liked men, and liked them now; but he had been trying to make himself believe that man was his enemy. He did not realize that his departure from his natural way of being was warping him, and that his associations were changing and perverting his whole nature.

He could never be the dog, affectionate, kind and subjective again. He was serving the wolf nature. He gloried in the chase, and revelled in the battle and the kill.

As he watched the wolves gathering in considerable numbers, running here and there in the timber that surrounded the beaver dam, he hesitated to join them. There were to be fights and struggles and kills. It would be better for him to get away to his hunting. There was not any too much game running. He had spied a deer free and full-paced the day before, but, as he was carrying home to Rada a young beaver he had killed, he did not give chase. He would run down in that country again; possibly he would have the good luck to meet up with another chance of a full meal and something to bring back to Rada.

Rada watched Alexis as he started south on his hunt, and then, curiosity compelling, she started across the beaver dam to where she saw a group of wolves milling about a tree on the edge of the opening. She was greeted by a number of gallants who seemed to be certain that she was the one sweetheart they all were seeking. She checked this

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impression as emphatically as she could, and so relieved their minds and her discomfort. With no place in particular to go, she found herself milling with the rest of the wolves, much in the fashion of humans at an exhibition or a convention. She saw wolves that she had met as far west as the Selkirks. One old beau, that had run through the Reserve when Lemus was denned up, accosted her. No one could mistake that old rat. He had never had a bath. There was a wolf from the Cypress Hills; she recalled his being in the fight when she and Lemus had made a meal off a dead battler.

Her disposition was not improved under the stress of undesired attentions. She felt that she would like to run for home, but hesitated. It would not do to be followed. Quietly she dropped back deeper into the brush, and carefully she made her way by a circuitous route through the brush to the rocky hill where her puppies were in the comfortable den, her home.

She had reached the bottom of the hill and was preparing to force her way through the heavy willows at the back of the rise so that she should not be seen, when, from behind a big boulder, walked

Bentick. Both wolves gave every demonstration of pleasure at the meeting. After a nose to nose caress, Rada leaped and fawned upon the older wolf, who returned, in a quieter fashion, all evidences of a mutual joy. In the wolf language, translatable through the signs and antics of pleasure demonstrated by all the dog family, Rada the younger was questioning Bentick regarding the past and the present. Then she had to tell her about her puppies. If Bentick would follow she would see the finest family in all the world. Bentick did follow, saw the puppies, and then without a single further demonstration crawled out of the den, and ran for the deep timber as fast as she could go.

Rada was shocked. She could not remonstrate, but she knew she had been spurned. Why? Her half-bred puppies? She was common and unclean. The nasty implication—and from Bentick. This was the wolf who had stolen her mate. Lemus would still be hers if Bentick had not come into their lives. Now, because she had had another mate, another lover, and her pups belonged not entirely to the wolves, she was to be spurned. Would she take it? The snub, the insult, the dismissal? She would

not. If Bentick were here among the wolves, Lemus was bound to be not far away. She would go out again as soon as she had suckled her babies, and hunt him up. She would show Bentick that Lemus belonged to her.

She did not have far to go in her search. The big wolf—bigger by far than any wolf ever seen in the district before—was lying stretched out on the snow where he had been rolling to cleanse his coat after a battle. His ears had been well pulled, and one paw looked sore and swollen, but otherwise he was fit and whole. Rada rushed to greet him and, in a lazy, indifferent sort of way, he returned her greetings. Standing beside her, he showed to advantage his size and weight. He was a killer, big enough to destroy, strong enough to shake the life out of any victim, and do it quickly; but somehow he was not impressive. He looked overfed, but he was not. He would have been if he had lived well, but the truth was that Lemus had lost the spark. He had lived well enough but he had been provided for. He was not a provider. The killer instinct was strong enough, but the gleaner, the hunter, the rustler, the go-getter instincts were missing. He

was sedentary, inactive, sluggish. He fought but one way, depending on his grip and his weight. When roused, he could be quick enough to secure, in the sparring, the hold he wanted. That secured, he would let his victim do the struggling. When the exhaustion came Lemus woke up to kill. So he lived.

Rada employed all her wiles to attract the big wolf. He was not physically able to respond to her sex appeal, although she did not fully credit him with this in her estimate of his reception of her. As she played about and fawned over the big beast she realized more and more that it was not love so much as loathing she had for the big, sodden brute. However, she had hunted him up to take him from Bentick and, believing in her right and her ability, she continued her attentions.

Would he go with her to see her puppies? He would, and together they started across the open meadow. Before they had gone far, something in the brush diverted his attention and he hurried from her to engage in another battle.

When Bentick left Rada, shocked and puzzled in the den, she headed directly for her own home. She had not intended to spurn, insult, or question

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Rada. She was not at all indifferent to the puppies. She was hurrying to bring Lemus. She had hurried to get away from him, and now that she needed him, wanted him to see what she had seen, she had to go after him. Lemus must know that Rada was alive and was again a mother. She did not realize anything suggestive in her abrupt departure, and intended nothing. She wanted Lemus, that was all.

She ran south and west in a general direction and, heedless of what was going on about her, held her course and her long wolf-stride for miles. Gradually, and for no reason known to herself, she began to veer her course to the south; then to the southeast, until at the end of an hour's run she had enclosed a considerable territory in the great circle she had made. As she crowned a hill she slowed up, stopped, and dropped on her belly to watch the work of a great hound stealthily approaching something hidden in or beyond a thicket of willow that stood alone by the side of a little frozen stream. He was moving, half-crouched, ready to spring, and waiting the opportune instant to break into action. The hound became impatient, and uttered a low guttural bark. Instantly a young bull moose sprang

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from behind the willows, and started on his hard, straight trot, faster than one could imagine who has not seen this great animal in full stride. The hound followed him and, running easily, was soon close behind. Bentick joined in the chase, and as she closed in with the hound he signalled a welcome to her. The moose was traveling fast, with the heritage of a youngster, was strong-winded and wonderfully built for speed. He was carrying no weight in his horns, but he had laid his head back so that his nostrils were open straight to the front and his noiseless breathing was an evidence of clear pipes and deep lungs.

In open country and easy going, a bull moose can trot faster than any standard-bred horse that ever looked through a bridle. This moose was putting a mile behind him every three minutes, and keeping up his speed for mile after mile, on rather rough terrain.

Alexis and Bentick, running together, gave out no hunting call, no rallying cry for help. Alexis did not know one even if he felt he needed assistance. This victim ahead would tire sometime,

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and the finish could be a one-handed job. He had been traveling almost due north, and in another fifteen or twenty minutes they would be close to the beaver meadow at home. Alexis knew what that meant. There would be thirty wolves, possibly more, to make and share the killing. Both he and this good-looking, good-natured wolf at his side would be lucky if they had a bite, after running twenty miles. He darted to the side, and then to the front of the moose and turned him out of his direction, to the east. Following by the side of his victim, Alexis began to figure out a plan of battle. He did not know whether he could trip this kill as he had the buck. The long legs and sharp, chisel-like hoofs, rising and falling in clock-like precision looked dangerous.

The moose was almost winded and was tiring fast. In an open space it stopped, breathless but defiant. Bentick rushed up to test its method of defense, and just escaped the downward blow from one of the hoofs; a blow that would have broken her neck if it had landed.

The throat hold was located at the dangerous

end of this beast. Those hoofs hit hard. Alexis might get hold of that upper lip that hung loose below the nose, but an attack there would be within range of the active hoofs. No use trying to pull one of his legs from under him; no chance to throw him. He was all legs and no rump. The wolf kill, the cursed hamstringing, was the only chance there was for taking this quarry. The quicker it was over the better. Bentick followed Alexis in the method of attack, and together they worked to bring down the kill. The wolf played for the nose of the moose, and for a moment pressed the attack to take its attention from Alexis. The hound jumped from behind, and with one bite of his strong jaws he snapped the hock cord of the right hind leg. While the beast sank, and struggled as it sank, Alexis snapped the other cord. The rest was simple. Bentick had a hold on the nose and lip, and pulled its head back. The hound secured its favorite grip on the throat, using all his strength to tear and cut the arteries and windpipe. Then they feasted. Alexis was mightily pleased with his companion, and evidently she was quite as well satisfied with

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him. They crept away to some bushes and lay down together for a rest and sleep.

When Alexis woke and prepared to run home, Bentick joined him, seemingly as a matter of course, and the dog was certain he wanted her to come. They had killed together, feasted together, slept together, and now to travel together was natural and rather pleasant.

Bentick had forgotten all about Lemus and her message to him; watching this big graceful hound chase, direct, and kill the moose had thrown Lemus into the background. The comparison between her wolf mate and this superb animal—the thought came to her instantly—He was the father of the half-breed puppies, Rada's mate.

Bentick was a wolf. She had ever been wonderful, but the beast within her did get to the surface occasionally. Now that she had guessed the truth about Rada and her mate, she was anxious to learn the effect her hunting with the hound would have. She cared little about Lemus, and she cared less for Rada; but she was uncertain about how it would all end.

Alexis, before he left, tore a great chunk off the flank of the moose—the part he always saved for Rada and her pups. Bentick burrowed into the carcass, and dissected out the heart, and together they seized their burdens and made off for the den on the hill.

The female wolf had hardly an appreciation of what she was doing. Rada had, in their past association, been so daring, so indifferent to the dangers of a disregard of the laws of the wolves, that she had become intolerable to Lemus and Bentick. Now, the shrewd female, typical of the species, was associating not with a strange wolf, but with a beast she instinctively knew to be an enemy. As a female, she might be satisfied that any male of the family would not harm her; but that in itself was no guarantee of safety. He was a killer, and they could never be trusted. The wolf smell was his, however. She had gained this when first she spied him down on the alders and willows stalking the moose.

Rada had not feared him; she had tolerated and loved him in her selfish, wolfish fashion. This dog had trailed back to wolfish habits, and he was a provider. That meant much to Bentick. She had

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not conceived this season, and soon the companion by her side would stimulate the passions she had submerged as unsatisfied. Lemus, the big ridgling, was no mate. He had been, and was now, an irritant, a mate to forget or to destroy.

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THE STAGE IS SET

AT supper that night the wolf men down at the camp had a long discussion regarding the further technique of the "round-up pack." The orders of Travis had been carried out, and the baits which were to bring in the wolves had been in position long enough to have it understood by all that a successful killing might result, if only the beasts would carry out their part of the program.

There were some differences of opinion regarding the number of wolves in the immediate neighborhood, but it was generally conceded that fully half a hundred males and their mates had been attracted. All the men had reported fights among the dog wolves; and one of the younger observers had witnessed through his glasses three fights in the early morning which might account for at least three deaths and possibly more.

"Did anybody see the big, dark-gray killer that

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wandered into the open at the beaver dam this afternoon?" asked Lilley, of Banff, the wolf man from the Cascade Park.

"I saw him twice," answered Joe Davidson. "He is a monster, and from his color he has Mexican or southern blood in him. He is hardly lighter in color on the belly than on the back. That is typical of the southern wolf, and not at all like the average northern specimen. His size and the depth of his chest would indicate an introduction of blood dissimilar to the Canadian wolf. However, that is merely my guess.

"I think he is slated to be pushed off tonight. He is big enough to be a king wolf, but he is a slacker in a fight. I saw him kill a young male about four o'clock, and he won't do in a rough and tumble scrap. He got his hold on the shoulders of that young dog wolf, and then rode the poor little devil into the ground, tired him out, and then nailed him when he was exhausted."

Travis had just entered the room as Davidson was speaking.

"Well, men, this is our big night. I hope you boys will be convinced that my idea of ridding a

district of wolves by making them kill each other is a good one. It has worked before and I think is working out better this time than at any previous trial I have given it.

"When the moon is well up, Joe Davidson and I will climb into the hide-out; Mark Lilley and Trend Masters will place a fresh portion of the bait; and you men can locate yourselves in the places you have prepared. We can hardly fail in the battle-ground. The bulk of the fighting is going to be out in that open trail. The old scent has died out by this time, and the man scent has mixed the wolves up in their first ventures. Now the new scent will go out more powerful than ever, and every old fool male will be sure that he alone is being called. Every other gallant will be an intruder, and will have to answer for his impudence. That means war, certain and devilish. More than that, I believe that every female will be on the edge of things, watching the struggle and, on occasion, will rush in to take a hand and become involved.

"It is not here, however, that I hope to get the females. Tomorrow the traps will be set, and the

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cheese bait will go out again. There will be a lot of lonesome, dejected, sorrowful widows mourning tomorrow night. That means that three out of four traps will hold a female wolf before this drive is finished. They will lose all interest in life, abandon their usual sense of precaution, and, in a reckless forfeiture of their courage, will wander to the plate of the traps to get one more smell of the insulting bait.

"The time is up and, if the moon is right, we will be all set for the night's work. Let every man pin to the leg of his trouser one of the rags out in the porch that has been baited and ready. When Joe and I have figured that the fight is over and it is time to come in, we'll send out a holler."

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THE BATTLE

THE wolves were hungry, tired, nervous, and angry. The females especially were dangerous in their spleen and suspicions. The males were not much better. Most of them had come long distances; and, once so close to the evidence of the loves and desires they craved, they hesitated to leave for even a short hunt for fear something which they felt they should not miss might happen while they were away. Old feuds were being revived, and old loves taunted and teased into a fever of hate that, sooner or later, was bound to flash out in a blaze of fury.

The howls seemed continuous, while the growls and throaty protests of the females were becoming fiercer and more emphatic as the night wore on.

When the men appeared on the road from the camp, the noise ceased for the moment, while the outlaws sneaked back into the timber.

Then, fresh on the night breeze came the new

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potent odor of the female temptation to the male. The baits were set again. As the wolves caught the scent, they began to hurry back into the range of the observers' vision. The man scent had been smothered, and there was no bar to the wolves gathering in a sort of frenzy of devilish anxiety about the trees where the bait was located. Again they milled about and through the open space before the observers in the trees, as they had in the afternoon.

The growls, threats, and quarrels were louder and more intense in their manifestations of hatred. As a group massed under one of the bait trees, there were all signs of a struggle to come that would be fiendish in its destructive results. A spark would set ablaze the fires of rage, jealousy and passion, and it came soon.

One of the smaller wolves, in trying to escape from the center of a mass into which he had wormed his way, lost his head and sprang into battle with another of his own size and weight. It would have made a fair and equal tussle under ordinary conditions, but it was all that was needed to start the big fight.

Big wolves and little ones rushed into the scramble. The smaller ones went down and, as they fell, the larger brutes tore and worried them to death. As the blood was spilled the demoniac natures were inspired to greater efforts. All battlers were enemies now, and none of the weaker ones could survive. As the wave of struggling, bleeding demons surged aside and left the victims exposed —some dead, some merely torn and bleeding, the females rushed in to kill and maim and drag out the wounded to feast upon.

Even this cannibalistic orgy could not satisfy the desire to fight and kill. The females were fighting now, even more wickedly than the males. Their rage and hysteria lifted the sound of battle almost to a scream. They were shorter timed, however, and more easily diverted and satisfied in their efforts at destruction than the males. When a female got badly bitten and torn, she would drop the fight to hurry away to care for her wound. Her rage died out under the stress of pain.

For an hour the desperadoes fought, few giving up the battle to slink away, and leave the field beaten. They were dying but, as the ebb of the

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battle cleared for them, they died gnashing their rage and spitting the bloody spume of their death wounds in the faces of the battlers who had destroyed them. It was not a battle royal between adversaries of equal strength and weight; it was not a struggle between wits and weight, agility and brute strength. It was the enraging, nauseating struggle of the stronger to destroy the weaker; the exhibition of the courage of an outlaw, a fight between the lawless, unprincipled and destructive.

Lemus was with Rada when the battle began. He had been with her when the new scent was laid in the trees, but he paid little heed to it. They had visited the den and the pups, and now Rada was holding close to Lemus, tempting him when she thought temptation would be a holding force, and rejecting his attentions when she realized the danger she might be drifting into with so many males about. She did not know how much of a wolf Lemus was, and how much of a gelding. If she led him on to passion's reckless impatience, and then checked him, as she would have to do, he might be dangerous. The tempers of all males were uncertain under those conditions.

At the first sound of the struggle, both wolves hurried across the beaver meadow, ran through the brush, and approached the edge of the fighting mass from the wooded side. That left them where an escape would be easy. This was Lemus' idea.

For some reason, the big wolf was the king wolf by virtue of his size and strength and for the reason that, as he possessed and practiced its prerogatives, no wolf had ever attempted to battle him. His logic on this occasion was reasonable. Why mix in this senseless squabble where a lot of hysterical desperadoes were struggling, fighting, chewing, tearing and killing? He alone could kill two or three of them in one battle, but why the effort?

Mixing with the females, both for Rada and Lemus, was out of the question. Why should she expose her body to be wounded when her puppies needed all her strength and substance to make them big and strong?

As Lemus moved about on the outside circle of the fighters, he engaged an occasional wolf who was making an attempt to escape for a long enough time to gain a breath of air. These poor winded brutes he could kill by the simple method used by

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most heavyweights; that is, holding the head fast then shouldering the resisting body over and on its back. After that, in wolfish fashion, he would rip the abdomen open, and leave the beast to die a lingering and cruel death.

Lemus, drew out the body of a dead wolf, and throwing it over his shoulders, as he had done months before, in the battle of wolves down in the Cypress Hills, he carried it back through the timber, circling the eastern edge of the beaver dam. Then, joined by Rada, he approached her den where the two wolves made a good meal.

Before they had finished, they heard the voices of the hunters and observers, as the men came scrambling down out of the trees. The female wolves had started back already into the heavy timber, and from all about came the dismal howls of distressed, fearful, and lonely widows. After the feast, Rada hurried directly to the den to learn how her babies were, and Lemus leisurely followed her. The moon was almost at the zenith, and the night was like day in the silver brilliance of the light. Across the beaver meadow, on the northern trail, the men were journeying back to the camp, busily

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recounting their experiences, and testifying to the virtue of the new scent as means of getting rid of the wolves. Gradually the night grew still, as the men entered the camp buildings, and, save for the howls of the widows, growing fainter in the distance, not a sound was heard.

19

LEMUS MEETS ALEXIS

LEMUS lay on the snow on the side of the hill, licking his swollen and wounded paw, and tenderly nursing a sore ear in the loose snow, when he was startled by the appearance of a mighty hound dog, carrying a great chunk of meat, and approaching with an authority that was embarrassing. He was due for a greater shock immediately afterwards when Bentick, his Bentick, came carrying another piece of meat.

This was the first time Lemus had ever seen so strange an animal as this, although he immediately gathered from the smell that he was of the dog family. He growled in his amazement, and was discouraged by the result. The big hound dropped his meat and leaped to battle. Before they could come to grips, however, Bentick sprang between them, and gently nosed the hound away. Gracefully

Alexis retired, picked up his meat, and carried it to the den.

Bentick tried to get her portion, when Lemus with a snarl jumped in front of her, and then with his fangs all exposed pushed her back, snarling and growling his rage as he did so.

Rada had followed Alexis out of the den as he returned to the wolves. As she approached, she discovered it was Bentick that Lemus was threatening. Why? Where had Bentick come from? How did it come that she appeared just when Alexis had returned from a hunt? Had they run together, to hunt and kill? Alexis, paying no heed to the disputants, picked up Bentick's burden of meat and started back to the den with it. In an instant Rada absorbed the situation. Bentick had hunted with Alexis. She had killed with him, feasted with him, and now she was trying to take him away from her as she had taken Lemus.

She sprang to seize Bentick by the ear, but Alexis rushed between them and shouldered Rada away. Then in rage she turned on him. He would protect Bentick from her rage? Who was he, and what was he? A silly pup she had stolen away from the man

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enemy. He would check her rush to punish this female thief, would he? The big coyote hunter! She had given him her body and borne him pups. What pups! Half-breeds, neither wolf nor dog. Those were the things she thought wonderful, and which Bentick had spurned as she had spurned their mother.

Her rage was hysterical, and as she rushed for the den, Alexis joined her anxiously. Lemus and Bentick followed at a little distance. In the presence of this greater alarm that might develop into a tragedy, their little tiff seemed silly.

Rada reached the pups instantly and seizing one of them rudely in her mouth she hurried out before Alexis could glean her purpose.

As hard as she could run, she measured the way to the open meadow. As Alexis attempted to seize her she dropped the puppy, and turned to meet him. She faced the three spectators to her insane rage, while the froth drooled from her jaws. The puppy whined in the cold and, feeling Rada's foot, tried to cling to her.

Alexis, stunned by the onslaught, approached to reach the puppy, but Rada sprang at him and, seiz-

ing him by the fleshy part of his paws, gave her weight to tear him. He jerked away and again reached for the puppy. Rada was too quick. She reached down and, taking the puppy in her jaws, she deliberately crushed its life out and dropped it at Alexis' feet.

The big hound, stooped and licked the body of the little pup, then taking it gently in his mouth, he carried it away. Before he struck the timber he was in the long, hard stride of the chase. A short run it was to a heavy clump of cedars, and in the deep heavy snow that had drifted there, Alexis placed the body of his puppy. He pawed snow over it, and registered, so that no wolf would disturb it.

Then he ran back again to the meadow to where Rada was still threatening and scolding at Bentick. As he appeared, both Rada and Lemus made as if to attack him, but hesitated as he approached. He was moaning and his low, guttural threats, so seldom heard, quieted Rada.

At about ten feet from the group, he stopped running and walked quietly forward. Lemus seemed to resent his approach, and advanced to meet him, growling and threatening. Rada was by

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his side, seconding the spirit of the big wolf. Alexis gave ground temporarily, trying to discover the attitude of Bentick. She appeared neutral, but she dropped behind and came up alongside Rada, who promptly threatened her as she had before.

Lemus, as Alexis retreated, became more insistent in his warnings and threats, and in every move the wolf made was seconded by Rada.

Alexis was not backing out of a battle; but he was trying to figure out how he could fight as he had been taught to fight with Rada hanging on to him. She was going to attack him soon, and so was Lemus. If Bentick could only be depended upon—but she, too, was a wolf. Killing Rada was going to be a pleasure. She had been the temptress, the pure adventuress. She certainly should die. Her murdered baby demanded it.

This big gelding of a wolf—not a sire, not a dam—was a ridgling killer. Tearing open that saggy throat would be easy. He could kill them all, if they would but come one at a time. He could win against the three, but they would tear him badly before he got them. He must think of his babies; he couldn't afford to be torn up.

Rada started the fight, as Alexis expected she would. She rushed at him, expecting Lemus to rush from the other side. The big wolf hesitated, possibly a little fearful of results, but long enough to make it rough sledding for Rada. Alexis met the attack in typical fashion. He turned his shoulder to her and, as she leaped on him to secure a hold, he reached back, caught her by the hind leg, and threw her heavily on the ground. It was the same open tactics of war he had shown her in his first fight with the wolverine. Before she could regain her courage and her wind, Lemus had started for Alexis. The hound leaped to one side, but as the wolf came on, another factor in the mix-up was in action. Bentick had Lemus by the hind leg, just above the hock, in the most sensitive part of the wolf's body, and was pinching so hard that it took all the fight out of Lemus. That was unfortunate for he needed everything he had to meet the fight Alexis had started in to make.

He rushed at Lemus when the wolf was trying to reach Bentick, bit him on the shoulder, and rolled the big battler ten feet. This was new warfare, and Lemus was not used to it, nor had he

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the brains to cope with it in any fashion. His was a different method of attack.

Rada now attacked Bentick to break her hold on Lemus' leg, and the two mixed it merrily for some time. Meanwhile Alexis and Lemus were sparring for an opening a few yards away. The hound could not afford to go into close grips, if he was to save himself from being torn. That was Lemus' idea of campaigning, but Alexis knew that in open warfare the wolf could not have a show to win. Lemus again was shouldered and knocked into a tail spin as Alexis threw his body check into action. Before the wolf could recover, Alexis had seized him by the sore ankle that Bentick had wounded. As Lemus doubled back to grab him, the hound took a leverage on the bone of the wolf's leg with a tight hold between his molars and, ducking his head sharply to one side, broke the bone squarely in two.

Rada, with bleeding ears and a torn jaw, broke from Bentick to rush to the aid of Lemus. Alexis was waiting for her, possibly anticipating such a move. He met her as she came, and dropped his nose close to the ground. As she climbed his fore-

quarters trying to wound him, by slashing with her teeth on his shoulder, he grabbed her by the fore leg near the body, lifted her up, and threw her again heavily on her back. This time she was stunned and giddy. Alexis seized her by the throat, and never let go his hold until her dead body lay bleeding and torn at his feet.

Meantime, Lemus was having a sad time with Bentick. She had kept him so busy warding off her rushing tactics, and at the same time trying to save himself the punishment from using his broken leg, that the big wolf was beginning to worry. His breath was coming in gasps. His eyes took on the despairing glare of a great distress. The killer was to be killed. If only he could get his grip on the neck or shoulder of Bentick, his weight would aid him. Bentick had no thought of letting the ridgling get such a leverage hold on her. She had seen such fighting tactics before, and knew how to avoid them. As Alexis dropped the torn and dead body of Rada, he rushed for Lemus. There was little need now for open warfare. Lemus would have a chance to use his strength and his weight.

To Alexis the close grips were satisfying. He

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could kill this big fellow in any form of warfare. He had just begun to fight. With a fury never guessed by Lemus, Alexis jumped into a clinch, and both secured holds. Lemus had a good hold on Alexis' shoulder, but the hound, with his long lithe body and neck, reached back and got Lemus by the loose skin of the flank. The wolf, realizing the danger of ripping the loose-folding, empty tissues, dropped his hold on the shoulder of the hound and reached for a closer hold on his neck so that he could thrust aside the hound's assault.

It availed him little. Alexis lifted and pushed as he raised the hind-quarters of the wolf. The result was inevitable. Lemus went over on his back, and before Alexis could seize him by the throat, the wolf in Bentick would not be denied. She tore open the belly, ripping till the intestines were out and tangled around the feet of the struggling battlers. Lemus was killed in the same horrible fashion he had always used on his adversaries.

Alexis and Bentick rolled in the snow, scrubbing their bodies, and cooling their inflamed ears. Alexis at length got up, shook the snow off, and walked over to the body of Rada. He sniffed at her nose

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to discover if there were any signs of life, then, satisfied, he trotted up to the den to his pups. Bentick, in turn, inspected both the bodies of Lemus and Rada and, before joining Alexis, crossed the open space of the beaver dam to the scene of the big fight. Both she and Alexis had missed this slaughter altogether. Now the wolf, in her inspection of the battle-ground, and the bearing of the potent scent of bait planted high up in the trees, seemed to sense the meaning of it all. With the dawn of this understanding, Bentick crossed back over the open ground to join Alexis in the den with the pups.

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TRAVIS and his men were out early the next morning. The night's work had justified the hope that the camp might break up within the week —ten days at the latest. The scalps and ears of the wolves, testimony sufficient to insure the bounty, was about all that was wanted now. The skins of most of the battlers would be worthless.

The results were gratifying. Until the men had made the rounds the harvest of killers would not be known, but the guesses ran high. There could not be a full count, for many of the wounded wolves had crawled away to die. Some that escaped would recover, but the district in which they had suffered so severely would know them no more. No wolf will remain in a territory where his own kind will punish him. The fear of traps will not drive them out. The thought that man is fighting him will nearly always induce a reprisal. When he has been wounded by his own species, however, he will travel on, and travel far.

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The men by noon, working steadily with skinning knives, had brought in thirty-one scalps of male wolves, and nine of the females.

"This is a big cleanup, men," said Travis at dinner, "larger than I have ever known before, but there were more of the vermin here than could be found nowadays in my country. Take it from me, the wolf is passing out, not because we men are so smart, but because we've got them scrapping among each other.

"Get out to the traps this afternoon. Set them off the trail a long stride to the right side, going out. Bait them with the cheese bait, and keep your moccasin soles smeared with it also. We will give the pests two days either to get caught or to get out of the country. If we miss them in two days, we'll move, for there will be little need for our staying."

As the men pulled out, Davidson suggested to Travis that they shift across the beaver dam and down to the bottom lands among the cedars and alders to the south.

"We will be almost sure to get some chicken or partridge, and I would like to secure a mess of

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porcupine quills for my boys. They are running mostly to Indian stuff this winter, and no boy can do full justice to his Indian stories without some evidence. That streak in boys they get from their mother, I would say. Fathers never needed much to back up their stuff. I try to tell mine convincing like, and it generally registers. Mebbe not."

"Mebbe not, Davidson," Travis added. "The old-time arguments don't go any longer, seems like."

The men crossed the north trail, circuited the little bluff, and hit through the timber that bordered the open meadow. To the left and about half a mile away was the battle-ground of the wolves. All the timber on the far side had sheltered the beasts in their activities; and throughout the aisles of the forest the tracks of bleeding wolves gave evidence of the intensity of their lusts and the penalties of their ventures.

To the south rose an abrupt rocky hill, crowned by a heavy growth of poplar lodged among and between the outcropping of limestone.

"Look across there, Joe," suggested Travis, pointing to some dark objects lying on the snow before them about the center of the meadow.

"Carcasses," said Davidson, "two critters fought it out in the open."

"We'll get the story of it on the snow. I wonder how they got out there."

The story of the tragedy was plain. The tracks, the scratchings, the marks where heavy stained bodies had been flung, the punctuations of blood clots and spatterings of spume from the bleeding jaws of the battlers were easily read by the expert eye.

"Some scrap, this," ventured Davidson as they approached.

"Looks like a family feud to me," answered Travis. "Got themselves separated from the crowd and fought it out here."

"A dog wolf and his mate, likely; and, Travis, look at the size of that wolf. That must be the beast that one of the men spoke about yesterday. We'll take the skin off that chap. That's the biggest wolf I ever saw, by far."

Davidson reached for his skinning knife and, taking the wolf by the hind foot, he threw the stiffened carcass over on its back.

"No use to try to skin him here," said Travis,

"he's frozen too hard. We'll get him later and thaw him out in the house. I wonder why that big devil grew to such a size. He was abnormal. What a coat he had! That dark gray was never intended for a snow country. He must have been an itinerant true enough, or else his sire was. His size puzzles me. Turn him over again, Davidson, pull apart those hind legs." Travis stooped down and ran his fingers through the fur, then he examined the half-open jaws, and beautiful teeth of the dead Lemus.

"This was a young wolf, less than two years old. He has had a bad tear from an accident or a battle, and it left him a ridgling. That is why he grew."

"What about this other carcass, Travis?" asked Davidson. "This is a female."

"Well, this big fellow might have had a mate, but not this lady. She was a young wolf, and no youngster outlaw will mate with a cripple, especially if he was incapacitated in this fashion."

"I don't get this killing just right. It is considerable of a puzzle. Let us look over the tracks. They ought to tell something. This was a family quarrel, not a community scrap. There were but four in it, so far as I can see. There are tracks of

two big wolves, and two small ones. See them, Davidson, where a big and a small wolf came running together from the timber? Now let us follow these tracks leading to the hill. But four tracks here. Two big wolves and two females. Now we have two dead heroes, and there are two live ones somewhere—one dog wolf as big as this monster, and one female of the same size as this dead one."

"Suppose we follow these tracks to the hill," suggested Davidson.

"That sounds reasonable," agreed Travis. "We might find a den. Hardly likely there would be a hide-out so close to the camp, but you can never be sure. Tell me, Joe. Did I hear some of the boys speak of taking a shot at a big Russian wolf-hound, a month or so ago?"

"Yes," answered Joe. "I don't just know now who it was, but he never knocked him. The critter got into the brush too soon for a second try."

"Well, if he wasn't hit badly, he likely is alive still and going strong. I have a hunch that hound has been in this fight. It has taken some battler to kill this big wolf. The tracks here show a dog or wolf as big as the dead soldier back there, and if

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there has been a big hound hereabouts, he is the one who has done the killing."

The tracks in the snow led them up the hill, along the brow of the shoulder of rock and directly to the mouth of the cave. The snow all around was packed down hard about the entrance, and the blood-stains showed where wounded animals had scrubbed their furs and shaken themselves before moving inside.

Cautiously the men approached, their guns ready for emergencies. Davidson stooped and peered into the darkness within. A faint whimpering reached their ears.

"Pups!" exclaimed Joe.

"Pups," agreed Travis, "but how, at this time of the year?"

"Can't help it, they're in there."

The puppies from within, hearing sounds, raised their pleadings from a whine to an emphatic appeal loud and prolonged. They were a hungry crew of babies, and it had been a long time between meals.

The men were satisfied that the den was empty save for the pups, and they debated as to the possibility of getting the little fellows out.

"Neither of us can make that hole. I was too wide for that twenty years ago," said Davidson.

"This is a job for the young men. Old badgers like us have had our day forcing wolf holes. The boys can come up tonight with a lantern and get the pups. Possibly they can get a shot at the others." While Travis was talking Davidson noticed him watching very closely the rock opening behind.

"Stand perfectly still, Davidson. There is a wolf in there. I saw her plainly as she peered out a minute ago. She is on sentry duty. If you had ventured in there, Joe, you would have lost the advance part of your features. Careful, she is peeking out again."

The wolf had been on duty, caring for the pups. She had fed them in the early morning from the half-digested food she had vomited before them, in the manner of the females giving their puppies their first solid food. There was little eaten. The pups clamored for the milk from the mother's paps. Bentick had eaten again from the meat she and Alexis had carried from the moose, and had gone to sleep while the food was digesting within her. Soon the little soldiers would be hungry enough to

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tackle any food, and then she would be ready for them.

When she awoke, she discovered, from the scent peculiar to man, the near presence of Travis and Davidson. Her first impulse was to run. Then she remembered—she was supposed to protect and care for these puppies. She crawled back into a corner of the den and waited.

The voices outside told of the presence of the men. Now what was to happen? The puppies heard the noise and began to whimper. This was a mere vocal introduction to what was to follow. They told of their hunger in all the inflections of dog and wolf language. Bentick was distracted. The louder the wails, the more certain she was that a disaster was due any moment.

She made ready to give a warm reception if any one attempted to enter the den. She would not merely scare him out. She would wait until he was well inside and then she would fight.

The voices became less distinct. Bentick moved forward to the entrance of the den, and tried to peer out. In the instant of securing a second look at her intruders, Travis had seen her. She felt that

her presence was known. Like a ghost she slid back into the farthest and blackest corner of the den. If only she had not ventured to look. Now that she had been seen, she felt that her enemy—her greatest and most efficient enemy—had her cornered. That was a good time for a wolf to fight. If Alexis had been there she would not have felt so helpless. Maybe he would return soon; but how could he reach the den when their enemies were before it? She would have to bide her time.

Travis and Davidson waited attentively for a little time, hoping that the wolf would make a rush for the open, for they both knew that a wolf dreads to be cornered, and will risk any hazard to gain its freedom. She kept them waiting too long, however, and they decided to risk leaving the pups till the men came home. The she wolf was likely to move them as soon as they had left, but keeping sentry in front of a wolf den on a cold winter's day is not at all a tempting sport.

They had hardly reached the path that led across the edge of the cliff, when, from the far side of the meadow below and before them, came the big yellow hound. His first sight of the men on the ledge be-

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fore the den had inflamed him instantly to a killing rage. With a rolling guttural howl he headed straight for them. He did not fear them as wolves fear and dread the presence of a superior intelligence. He knew what they were, and the limits of their strength in battle. If he had remembered how they could fight and kill from a distance, in his rage he heeded it not. He intended to kill them. The domestic strain in his nature had been entirely submerged. He was a killer, as savage as any wolf, bolder than any wolf, and as relentless in his destruction as any outlaw in the Timber. He had a quarter of a mile to run before he struck the hill, and was coming fast. His howls had reached Bentick within the den, and she returned the challenge to his enemies with her prolonged love note. She would fight with him.

"Looks like me and you, Joe, are being headed into a mix-up. That's the big hound we've been talking about." Tracy was trying to get things right in his mind. "He's heading for us. No wolf would do that, not even to protect his mate. He's coming to kill or be killed, and bird-shot is about all we can rely on to give us a chance."

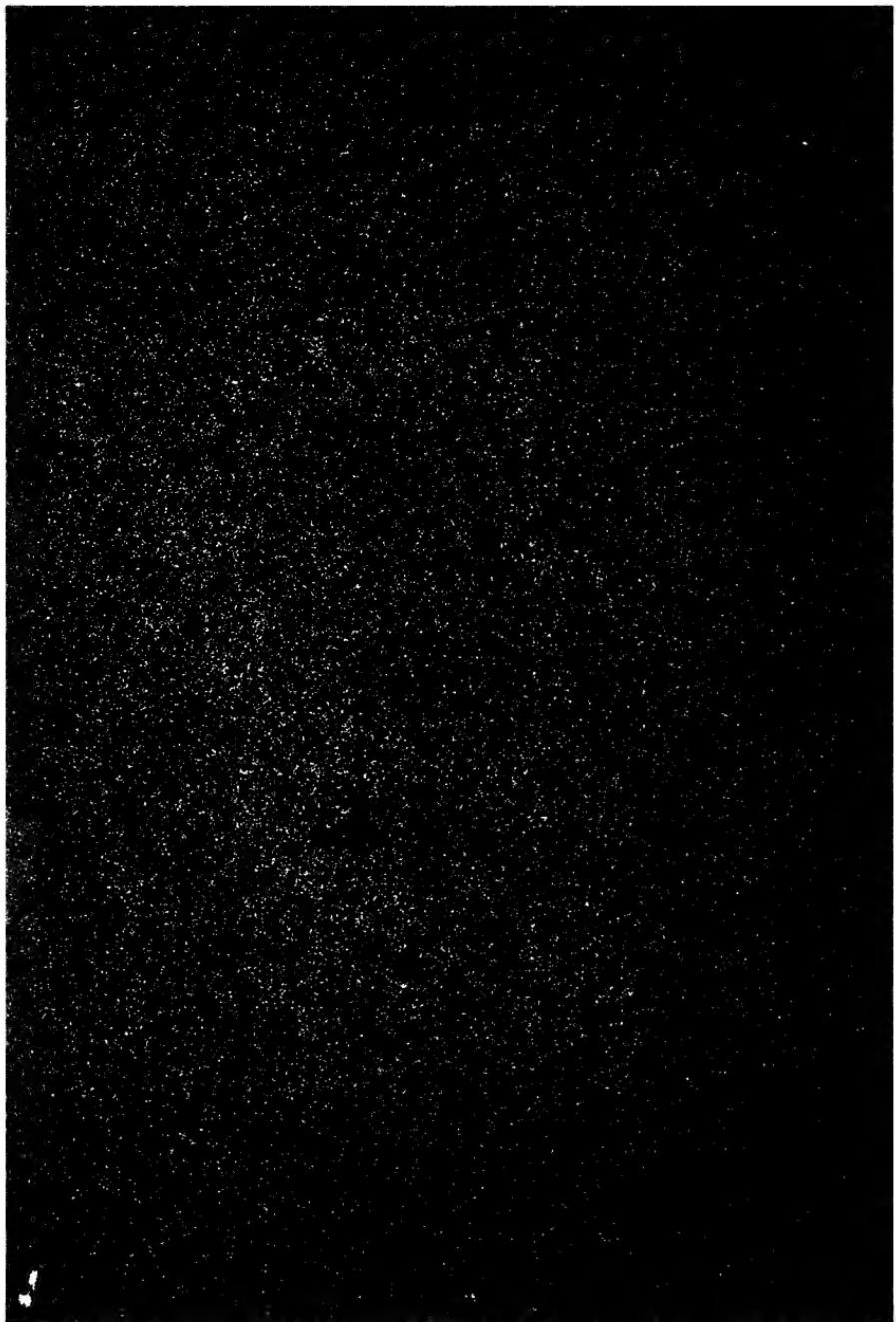
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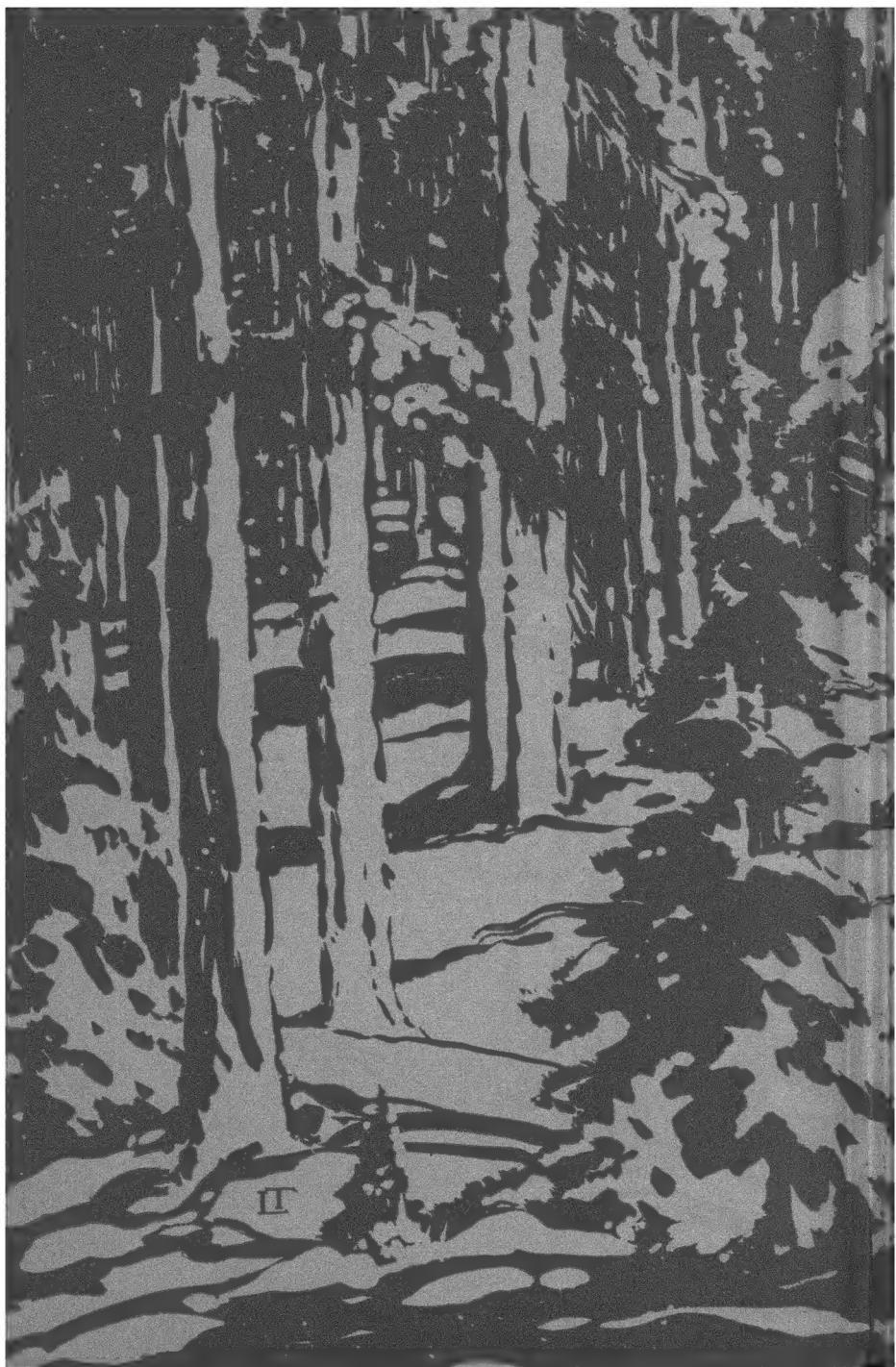
"We can stop him with what we've got, if we let him come close enough," answered Davidson. "Climb this rock beside me and when his rush breaks, shoot. A handful of bird-shot at anything like a close range will stop a lot of bad notions."

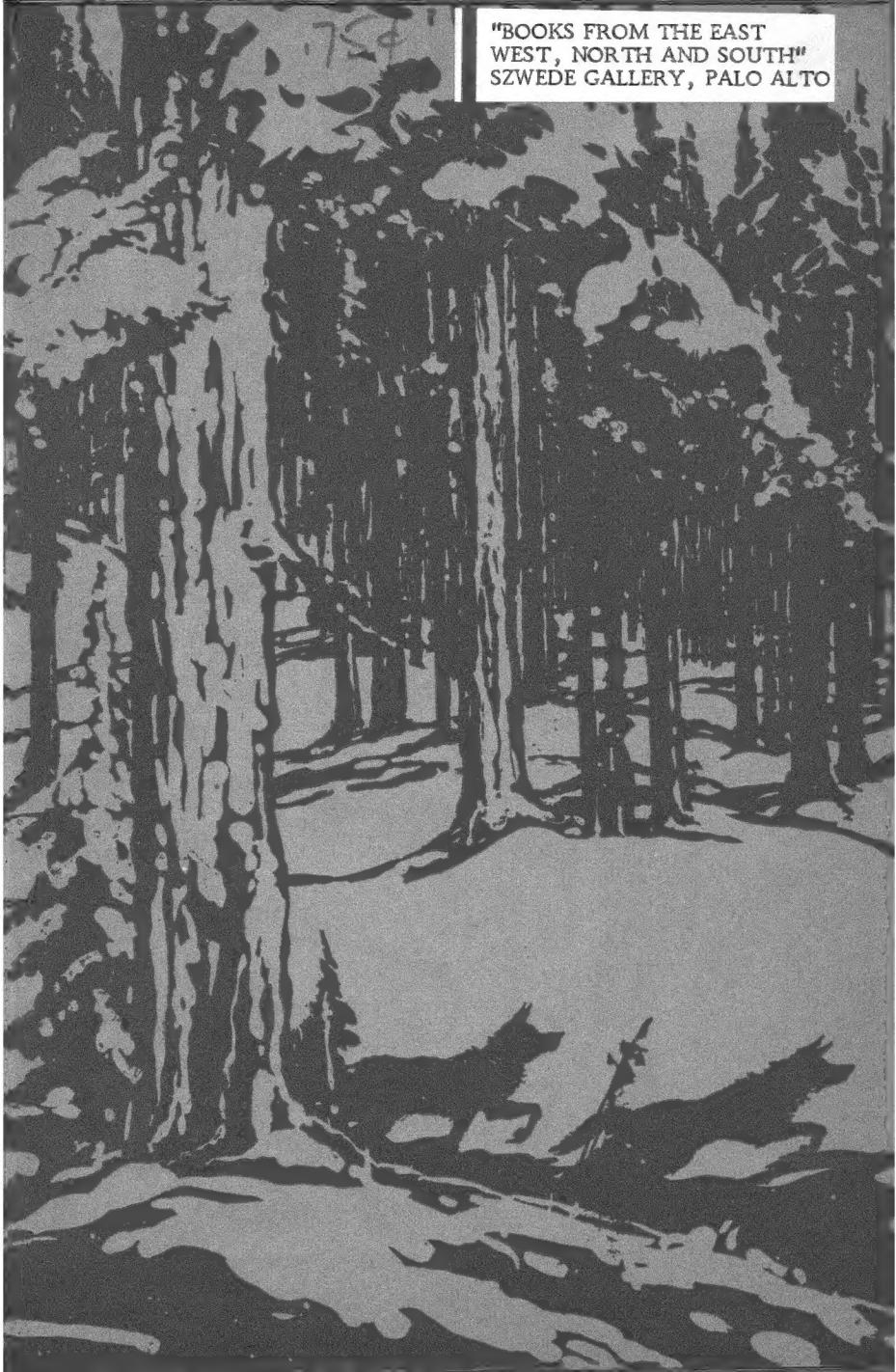
The big hound was coming fast, and how he could run! Thirty feet through the air as he leaped some fallen timber. Now he was at the base of the hill, and in seconds he would be in front of them, to charge and tear them to pieces if he could, or be killed in his efforts to protect his pups.

The men loosed the safety catches on their guns and waited. The hound hardly slowed in his scramble up the side of the cliff, and now he came rushing, a yellow, stained demon of destructive rage. He never hesitated. His leap began ten feet from the rock on which they stood, and it was in his mid-air flight that their fire hit him. The impetus of his hurling dead body knocked them sprawling from their position. Davidson hit his head on a rock as he fell, and lay stunned for a moment.

Travis was on his feet soon enough to meet the rush of Bentick, and at his shot she fell in a heap at the side of the mate she had so lately won.







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